*This Volume belonged to the Library of the late* Rev. David Welsh, D.D., *which was purchased and presented to the Library of the New College by a number of his friends and admirers, as a mark of respect to his memory.*

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THE

# WORKS

OF

# JOHN WITHERSPOON, D.D.

SOMETIME MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT PAISLEY, AND LATE PRESIDENT OF PRINCETON COLLEGE, NEW JERSEY.

CONTAINING

## ESSAYS, SERMONS, &c.

ON

## IMPORTANT SUBJECTS;

INTENDED TO ILLUSTRATE AND ESTABLISH THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION BY GRACE, AND TO POINT OUT ITS INFLUENCE ON HOLINESS OF LIFE.

TOGETHER WITH HIS

## LECTURES ON MORAL PHILOSOPHY, ELOQUENCE AND DIVINITY;

## HIS SPEECHES IN THE AMERICAN CONGRESS;

AND MANY OTHER VALUABLE PIECES, NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED IN THIS COUNTRY.

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# ESSAYS

ON

# IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

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AN

# ADDRESS

TO THE

## STUDENTS OF THE SENIOR CLASS, AT PRINCETON COLLEGE,

SEPTEMBER 23, 1775,

*Who were to receive the degree of* BACHELOR *of* ARTS.

---

GENTLEMEN,

AS you have now finiſhed the uſual courſe of ſtudy in this place, and are to enter upon public life in a variety of ways, as each ſhall be determined by inclination or other circumſtances, I willingly embrace the opportunity of addreſſing an exhortation to you, at this important and intereſting period of your lives. I do not mean to ſay much, if any thing, that you have never heard before, but to lay hold of your preſent ſituation, with ſome hope, that what may be ſaid now, will remain upon your memory, and have an influence upon your future conduct. That I may ſpeak with the greater clearneſs and preciſion, I will divide what I have to ſay, into three branches.—I. Your duty to God, and the intereſt of your ſouls. II. The proſecution of your ſtudies, or the improvement of your talents, as members of ſociety. III. Prudence in your commerce with the world in

general, your outward proviſion, and other circumſtances in life.

I. As to the firſt of theſe, it is to all men of the greateſt moment. Some of you, I know, and more, I hope, are intended for the ſervice of Chriſt in the miniſtry. To this we have the univerſal ſuffrage, that true religion is abſolutely neceſſary, with which I heartily agree. But I wiſh thoſe who are deſtined for other employments, may not ſometimes make a compariſon here, unjuſt in itſelf, and dangerous, perhaps even ruinous, to their own ſouls. Becauſe true religion is neceſſary to a miniſter, and they are conſcious to themſelves, or at leaſt ſuſpect, that they are without religion; inſtead of laying to heart the things that belong to their peace, they only determine that they will follow ſome other calling. But, alas! though the difference to the public is very great, the difference to the perſons themſelves, ſeems to me but very ſmall. A clergyman without religion, to be ſure is a dreadful character, and when viſible, a deteſtable one; but truly, one would think, at the cloſe of life, it will be but little comfort to a man, that he muſt go to the place of torment, not as a miniſter, but as a lawyer, phyſician, ſoldier, or merchant. Therefore ſuffer me to ſay to you, and to all who now hear me, that the care of your ſouls is the one thing needful. All mankind, of every rank, denomination and profeſſion, are ſinners by nature. The miniſters of the New Teſtament have received a commiſſion to preach the goſpel to every creature: "He that believeth

ſhall be ſaved, and he that believeth not ſhall be damned."

While I ſay this, I beg of you to conſider that the advantages which you have enjoyed, will be an aggravation of your guilt, if they are unimproved. There is an equity as well as wiſdom often to be obſerved in the providence of God. Unleſs reaſons of ſovereignty, that is, reaſons unknown to us, prevent it, judgment will be inflicted, when a perſon or people is ripe for the ſtroke. Therefore, as ſome plants and ſeeds, both from their own nature, and from the ſoil and ſituation in which they are placed, ripen ſooner than others, ſo ſome perſons, by the early pains taken upon them, and the privileges they have enjoyed, fill up the meaſure of their iniquities ſooner than others, and are more ſpeedily overtaken with deſerved vengeance. There are many common ſayings that are the effects of error and prejudice; for example, that which you will be told by many, that the children of good men are as bad as any. If this is intended to inſinuate that a regular and pious education affords no ground to hope for good behaviour in after life, it is at once contrary to reaſon and experience. But if we ſhould ſay that when young perſons, piouſly educated, burſt reſtraining bonds aſunder, and are ſeduced into vicious courſes, they commonly run faſter and farther than others, it is a certain fact, which may be eaſily accounted for, and affords an important inſtruction to all.

After intreating you to lay religion to heart, I muſt beſeech you to guard againſt being too eaſily ſatisfied in a matter of infinite moment. Do not

think it enough to be prudent, cautious, or decent in your conduct, or to attain a character formed upon worldly principles, and governed by worldly motives. I am not againſt (as you all know) introducing every argument againſt ſin, and ſhewing you that looſe practices are ruinous to name, body and eſtate. Neither is it wrong that you ſhould fortify every pious reſolution by the addition of theſe motives. But alas! the evil lies deeper. "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." True religion muſt ariſe from a clear and deep conviction of your loſt ſtate by nature and practice, and an unfeigned reliance on the pardoning mercy and ſanctifying grace of God.

Suffer me, upon this ſubject, earneſtly to recommend to all that fear God, to apply themſelves from their earlieſt youth, to the exerciſes of piety, a life of prayer and communion with God. This is the ſource from which a real Chriſtian muſt derive the ſecret comfort of his heart, and which alone will give beauty, conſiſtency, and uniformity, to an exemplary life. The reaſon why I have mentioned it on this occaſion is, that youth, when the ſpirits are lively and the affections vigorous and ſtrong, is the ſeaſon when this habit muſt be formed. There are advantages and diſadvantages attending every ſtage of life. An aged Chriſtian will naturally grow in prudence, vigilance, uſefulneſs, attention to the courſe of providence, and ſubjection to the divine will, but will ſeldom attain to greater fervor of affection, and life in divine worſhip, than he had been accuſtomed to from his

early years. On the contrary, he will generally ſee it neceſſary inſtead of truſting to occaſional impulſes, to guard and ſtrengthen the habit by order and form.

Be companions of them that fear God. Eſteem them always moſt highly, and ſhun, as a contagious peſtilence, the ſociety not only of looſe perſons, but of thoſe eſpecially whom you perceive to be infected with the principles of infidelity, or enemies to the power of religion.—Many of theſe are much more dangerous to pious perſons than open profligates. As for theſe laſt, decency is againſt them; the world itſelf condemns them; reaſon deſpiſes them, and prudence ſhuns them. He muſt have a very mean taſte indeed, who is capable of finding pleaſure in diſorder and riot. If I had no higher pleaſure on earth than in eating and drinking, I would not chooſe to eat and drink with the drunken. Order, neatneſs, elegance, and even moderation itſelf, are neceſſary to exalt and refine the pleaſures of a ſenſual life. Therefore I will not allow myſelf to ſuppoſe, that I ſhall afterwards hear of any of you roaring and ſwearing in taverns, or waſting your bodies and eſtates by lewdneſs and debauchery, or that you take pleaſure in thoſe who do ſo. But be eſpecially careful to avoid thoſe who are enemies to vital piety, who do not pretend to ſpeak directly againſt religion, but give every vile name they can think of to all who ſeem to be in earneſt on that ſubject, and vilify the exerciſes of religion, under the names of whining, cant, grimace, and hypocriſy. Theſe are often unhappily ſucceſsful in making ſome uncautious perſons aſhamed of their Re-

deemer's name, his truths, his laws, his people, and his croſs.

I need hardly obſerve, that this is not to be underſtood as recommending phariſaical pride and ſupercilioufneſs; far leſs a raſh and preſumptuous judging of the ſtate of others. It is not only lawful, but our duty, to have a free communication with our fellow-citizens, for the purpoſes of ſocial life: it is not only lawful, but our duty to be courteous, and to give every proper evidence of reſpect and attention to others, according to their rank and place in ſociety. What I mean to caution you againſt is, an unneceſſary, voluntary intercourſe, ſuch as has inclination for its motive, and pleaſure for its object. With reſpect to this, we need not heſitate to ſay, with the inſpired prophet, "He that walketh with wiſe men ſhall be wiſe, but a companion of fools ſhall be deſtroyed."

II. I come now to ſpeak a little upon the proſecution of your ſtudies, and the improvement of your talents. Your education in a ſeminary of learning, is only intended to give you the elements and firſt principles of ſcience, which ſhould whet your appetite for more, and which will enable you to proceed with an aſſured hope of ſucceſs. It hath been generally a favourite point with me, to recommend the union of piety and literature, and to guard young perſons againſt the oppoſite extremes. We ſee ſometimes the pride of unſanctified knowledge do great injury to religion; and on the other hand, we find ſome perſons of real piety, deſpiſing human

learning, and diſgracing the moſt glorious truths, by a meanneſs and indecency, hardly ſufferable, in their manner of handling them. On this account, induſtry and application to ſtudy, is of the utmoſt importance to thoſe who are intended for the office of the miniſtry.

But I have it further in view, to recommend to you all, without exception, a life of diligence and application. Avoid ſloth, as a dangerous enemy. Fear it, hate it, and deſpiſe it. It is a common ſaying, that men do not know their own weakneſs; but it is as true, and a truth more important, that they do not know their own ſtrength. I deſire that you will receive the following information from me, which I dare ſay, every perſon of judgment and experience will confirm, that multitudes of moderate capacity have been uſeful in their generation, reſpected by the public, and ſucceſsful in life, while thoſe of ſuperior talents from nature, by mere ſlothfulneſs and idle habits, or ſelf-indulgence, have lived uſeleſs, and died contemptible. There is alſo a diſpoſition in young people, which you know I have often ſet myſelf to oppoſe, to think that looſe, irregular ſallies, and ſometimes even vicious liberties, are a ſign of ſpirit and capacity. The very contrary is the truth. It requires no genius at all to do miſchief. Perſons of the greateſt ability have generally been lovers of order. Neither is there any inſtance to be found, of a man's arriving at great reputation or uſefulneſs, be his capacity what it might, without induſtry and application.

Suffer me here, in a particular manner, to recom-

mend to you a firmneſs of mind, and ſteady perſeverance, as of the utmoſt moment to your progreſs and ſucceſs. Whatever a man's talents from nature may be, if he apply himſelf to what is not altogether unſuitable to them, and holds on with ſteadineſs and uniformity, he will be uſeful and happy; but if he be looſe and volatile, impatient of the ſlowneſs of things in their uſual courſe, and ſhifting from project to project, he will probably be neither the one nor the other.

I am ſomewhat at a loſs what to ſay, as to character and reputation; yet it is ſo important a point that it muſt not be omitted. True religion ſhould furniſh you with a higher and nobler principle to govern your conduct, than the deſire of applauſe from men. Yet, in ſubordination to what ought to be the great purpoſe of life, the approbation of the great Judge, there is a juſt and laudable ambition to do what is praiſe-worthy among men. This ought not to be extinguiſhed in the minds of youth; being a powerful ſpur and incitement to virtuous or illuſtrious actions. A truly good man will ſeek no praiſe but by honeſt means, and will be ſuperior even to diſgrace itſelf, if brought upon him by adherence to his duty. Yet he will alſo be tender and careful, not to give juſt cauſe to any to impeach his conduct. If I might be permitted to direct your views upon this ſubject, I would ſay, conſider that your character is already beginning to form. Every ſtep you take further in life, will both aſcertain and ſpread it. You ought alſo to be informed, that notwithſtanding all the hackneyed complaints of the

partiality and cenſoriouſneſs of the world, a man's real character, in point of ability, is never miſtaken, and but ſeldom in point of morals. That there are many malicious and cenſorious perſons, I agree: but lies are not half ſo durable as truth. There is an impartiality in a diffuſive public, which will ſhew itſelf where means of information are afforded to it. Therefore reverence the judgment of mankind without idolizing it. Be as cautious as poſſible to do nothing that deſerves cenſure, and as little concerned as poſſible what reproaches may fall upon you undeſerved. It is not a contradiction, but perfectly conſiſtent to ſay, a man ſhould be tender and even jealous of his character, and yet not greedy of praiſe. There is an amiableneſs and dignity in the firſt, but a meanneſs and littleneſs in the laſt.

Another advice, near a-kin to the laſt, is, do as much as you can to deſerve praiſe, and yet avoid as much as poſſible the hearing of it. This is but another view of the ſame ſubject; and that it may be the more uſeful, and my intention in it the more manifeſt, I will extend it both to praiſe and diſpraiſe. When you come into public life, and become the objects of general attention, not only guard againſt fiſhing for applauſe, and being inquiſitive after what people think or ſay of you, but avoid knowing it as much as you decently can. My reaſon for this is, that whether you will or not, you will hear as much of the ſlanders of your enemies as you will bear with patience, and as much of the flattery of your friends, or intereſted perſons, as you will bear with humility. Therefore, prepare yourſelf for both, but ſeek for neither. Seve-

ral eminent authors, as you doubtleſs know, have given it as an advice to young clergymen, and other public ſpeakers, to get a friend who is a good judge, and intreat him to make remarks upon their compoſition, carriage, delivery, &c. with fidelity. I have nothing to ſay againſt the goodneſs of the advice in itſelf, but at the ſame time, I have no great conviction of the neceſſity or even the utility of it. It is very ſeldom that advice is aſked in this manner, but with a view to obtain a compliment; and ſtill ſeldomer that it is given with ſufficient freedom and impartiality. If any man has humility and ſelf-denial enough to wiſh to know his own faults, there will be little difficulty in diſcovering them. Or if we could ſuppoſe, there were difficulty to himſelf, his enemies or rivals, or talkative people, though they be neither the one nor the other, will ſupply the defect. Perhaps you will think, that in the ſtrictures of malice and envy, there is generally an acrimony that has no great tendency to reform; like a ruſty knife, which makes a very painful wound, though not very deep. I agree to this fully, and yet affirm, that there is ſo much the more virtue, ſo much the more wiſdom, and perhaps I may add, ſo much the more pleaſure, in making this uſe of them

I conclude this part of my ſubject, with adviſing you to maintain a friendſhip with one another, and to carry the intimacies of early life through the whole of it. To this I add, that you ought to deſire and cultivate the correſpondence of men of piety and learning. Man, made for ſociety, derives his chief advantages of every kind, from the united

efforts of many conſpiring to the ſame end.—As to piety, nothing is more eſſential to it, than ſocial communication. It properly conſiſts in the ſupreme love of God, and fervent charity to all men. The Chriſtian alſo hath need of the aſſiſtance of others in his paſſage through this world, where he has ſo much oppoſition to encounter. Thoſe who deſerve this character, are ſaid to be pilgrims and ſtrangers in the earth. Therefore they ought to keep together, leſt they loſe their way. They comfort each other in diſtreſs, they aſſiſt each other in doubts and difficulty, they embolden each other by their example, and they aſſiſt each other by their prayers.

This is no leſs the caſe in reſpect to literature. It has been obſerved, that great and eminent men have generally, in every nation, appeared in cluſters. The reaſon of this probably is, that their ſociety and mutual intercourſe greatly adds to their improvement, and gives force and vigor to the talents which they may ſeverally poſſeſs. Nothing is ſo powerful an incitement to diligence, or ſo kindles the beſt ſort of ambition, as the friendſhip, advice, and aſſiſtance of men of learning and worth. The approbation of one ſuch, is of more value to a noble mind, than peals of applauſe from an undiſcerning multitude. Beſides, the aſſiſtance which men of letters give to each other, is really neceſſary in the execution of particular works of great compaſs and utility. If it is by the labours of preceding ages, that it is now poſſible in one life to attain to ſuch a degree of knowledge as we have ſometimes ſeen, ſo it is by the concurrence of many friends lending

their aſſiſtance, that one man has been ſometimes able to preſent to the public, a ſyſtem of ſcience, which, without that aid, he alone would have in vain attempted to bring to perfection. There is no circumſtance which throws this new country ſo far back in point of ſcience, as the want of public libraries, where thorough reſearches might be made, and the ſmall number of learned men to aſſiſt in making reſearches practicable, eaſy or complete.

III. The laſt head on which I promiſed to give you my advice, was prudence in your communication with the world in general, your outward proviſion and other circumſtances that conduce to the happineſs and comfort of life. On this ſubject, I begin with what I have often recommended to you, frugality in the management of your affairs, order and exactneſs in your dreſs, furniture, books, and keeping of accounts. Nothing could be further from my mind than to recommend the temper or conduct of avaricious men, whoſe ſordid ſouls have no higher ambition, and indeed, hardly any other deſire than that of getting pelf. This is not only unbecoming a gentleman and a ſcholar, but, in my opinion, wholly inconſiſtent with the character. I never knew an inſtance of a perſon in whom this diſpoſition took place in early life, that could apply to ſtudy, or that became eminent in any thing that was good. The oppoſite vice is the common fault of youth, and it is againſt this I would caution you. The frugality I would recommend, is that of an independent mind, that fears and ſcorns ſubjection to others, and remembers the juſt ſaying of Solomon,

that *the borrower is ſervant to the lender.* That frugality which ariſes from order and œconomy is not only conſiſtent with, but it is the parent of liberality of ſentiment and generoſity of conduct. It is indeed the ſource of beneficence, for no man can beſtow out of an empty purſe. On the other hand, covetouſneſs and profuſion are by no means repugnant to each other; and indeed they are more frequently joined than many apprehend. The ſtricture of Salluſt in the character of Cataline, *alieni appetens, ſui profuſus,* has been often cited, and may generally be applied to looſe and profligate livers. I hope therefore you will learn betimes to diſtinguiſh between the virtue and the vice, and to adhere to the one as much as you deſpiſe the other.

I will make an obſervation here, which may be applied not only to the diſtinction of character in this inſtance, but in almoſt every other that has been, or ſhall be mentioned. It will be much your intereſt, if you learn betimes to make not a haſty but a deliberate and candid judgment, when you infer character from appearances. The habits of life which men contract, give a bias to their opinions and even a tincture to their converſation and phraſeology. Perſons inclined to levity and diſſipation, will often aſcribe to covetouſneſs, what ariſes from very different cauſes. I have known, even in youth, a perſon, declining to engage in a party of pleaſure, accuſed by his companions as mean and ſneaking, and afraid of his purſe, when, in reality, it was not that he loved money more, but pleaſure leſs. It may ſometimes happen, that a perſon of principle will ſee it proper to decline meetings of feſtivity

though not directly ſinful, as an unneceſſary waſte of time, or from ſome other circumſtance to him dangerous and enſnaring. I have alſo ſeen perſons more advanced in years, who from a habit, perhaps a neceſſary habit, of ſtrict temperance, and retired manner of life, were very ſparing of perſonal expence, and even not much diſpoſed to ſocial intercourſe, and therefore called cloſe or covetous, and yet when applied to, for pious and charitable purpoſes, would be much more liberal than others of an oppoſite turn of mind. Obſervations perfectly ſimilar might be made upon the oppoſite character of liberality. It is not every kind of openneſs of heart that indicates profuſion. We are told by Solomon, Prov. xi. 25. "That the liberal ſoul ſhall be made fat," and by the prophet Iſaiah, Iſa. xxxii. 8. "That the liberal deſireth liberal things, and by liberal things he ſhall be eſtabliſhed." From theſe contraſted remarks, I infer, that as it is ſeldom neceſſary to judge peremptorily of others, ſo forbearance and the moſt charitable allowance, is both our duty and intereſt.

In the next place, I recommend to you humility of heart and meekneſs of carriage. I conſider in this place, the grace of humility as a virtue eſpecially ſerviceable to your earthly comfort. I conſider and mean to treat it as a maxim of worldly prudence. The ſcripture ſeems to point it out as peculiarly neceſſary for this purpoſe, and to annex the promiſe of earthly happineſs to the practice of it: Matth. v. 5. "Bleſſed are the meek," ſays our Saviour, "for they ſhall inherit the earth." I would underſtand him as ſaying, every good man

ſhall inherit the kingdom of heaven, but thoſe who excel in meekneſs, ſhall of all others have comfort on earth. In many different views, we may ſee the propriety of this connection. Nothing is more offenſive to others, than a proud aſſuming manner. It not only magnifies every fault, but vitiates even good conduct. It is not only odious to virtuous perſons, but it is equally, if not more ſo, to thoſe who are without principle. Some vices recommend a man to the vicious in the ſame line, as one drunkard is pleaſed with the ſight of another; but nothing is ſo hateful to a proud man as another of the ſame character, nor is offence ſooner given or taken than between thoſe, who in this reſpect, perfectly reſemble one another. This vice is not only odious to perſons of underſtanding and reflection, but to the moſt ignorant, being as eaſily perceived as it is univerſally hated.

The moral virtue of meekneſs and condeſcenſion, is the beſt ground-work even of worldly politeneſs, and prepares a man to receive that poliſh, which makes his behaviour generally agreeable, and fits him for intercourſe with perſons in the higher ranks of life. The ſame virtue, by the compoſure and ſelf-command that accompanies it, enables a man to manage his affairs to advantage, in whatever calling he may be engaged, or in whatever ſtation he may be placed. A good ſhopkeeper is commonly remarkable for this quality. People love to go where they meet with good words and gentle treatment; whereas the peeviſh and petulant may be ſaid to have a repelling quality about them that will not ſuffer any body to approach them.

To complete the whole, meekneſs of ſpirit is as uſeful to a man's ſelf, as meekneſs of carriage is acceptable to others. The meek ſuffer much leſs from the unavoidable evils of life, than thoſe of a contrary diſpoſition. Many croſs accidents of the leſs important kind, are in a manner annihilated when they are borne with calmneſs. The injury they do us, is not owing half ſo much to their weight or ſeverity, as to the irritability of their own minds. It is evident that the ſame diſpoſition muſt greatly alleviate calamities of a heavier kind; and from analogy you may perceive, that as it mitigates the ſorrows, it multiplies and adds to the ſweetneſs of the comforts of life. A moderate portion gives greater ſatisfaction to the humble and thankful, than the moſt ample poſſeſſions to the proud and impatient.

Nearly allied to the above virtue, is the government of your paſſions, and therefore of this I ſhall ſay but little. Every one muſt be ſenſible how important it is, both for the ſucceſs of your worldly callings, and your uſefulneſs in public life, to have your paſſions in due ſubjection. Men of furious and ungoverned tempers, prone to exceſs in attachment and reſentment, either as to perſons or things, are ſeldom ſucceſsful in their purſuits, or reſpected and uſeful in their ſtations. Perſons of ungoverned paſſions, are almoſt always fickle and changeable in their meaſures, which is of all things the moſt fatal to important undertakings. Theſe generally require time and patience to bring them to perfection. As to public and political life in particular, the neceſſity of ſelf-government is ſo great,

and ſo univerſally acknowledged, that it is uſual to impute it in eminent men, not to principle, but addreſs and policy. It is commonly ſaid that politicians have no paſſions. Without inquiring into this, I ſhall only ſay, that whatever truth may be in it, it is ſtill in favour of my argument. The hypocriſy does honour to the virtue. If the appearance be ſo neceſſary or ſo uſeful, what muſt be the value of the reality?

I will here take an opportunity of confuting, or at leaſt correcting, a common ſaying or proverbial ſentiment, many of which indeed that obtain belief in a blinded world, are nothing but falſe colouring and deception. It is uſual to ſay, in defence of ſudden and violent paſſion, that it is better to ſpeak freely and openly, than to harbour and cover ſecret heart malice. Perhaps I might admit that this would be true, if the inward rage were to be as violent, and continue as long, and return as often, as indulged paſſion. Every perſon muſt agree, that wherever there is a deep and laſting hatred, that never forgets nor forgives, but waits for the opportunity of vengeance, it deſerves to be conſidered as a temper truly infernal. But in moſt inſtances of offence between man and man, to reſtrain the tongue is the way to govern the heart. If you do not make mention of an injury, you will truly and ſpeedily forgive it, and perhaps literally forget it. Rage is in this reſpect like a fire; if a vent is given to it, it will increaſe and ſpread, while there is fuel to conſume, but if you can confine and ſtifle it, you will completely extinguiſh it.

To the government of the paſſions ſucceeds the government of the tongue. This indeed will in a

great meaſure, be the effect of the former, and therefore is recommended by all the ſame arguments, yet it deſerves very particular attention, ſeparately as a maxim of prudence. There are great indiſcretions in ſpeech, that do not ariſe from paſſion, but from inattention and want of judgment as to the propriety of time and place, and indeed many other ſources. I would therefore earneſtly recommend to you to habituate yourſelves to reſtraint in this reſpect, eſpecially in the early part of life. "Be ſwift to hear," ſays St. James, "and ſlow to ſpeak." Forwardneſs in ſpeech is always thought an aſſuming thing in youth, and in promiſcuous companies is often conſidered as an inſult, as well as an indiſcretion. It is very common for the world in general, and ſtill more ſo for men of judgment and penetration, to form an opinion of a character on the whole, from ſome one circumſtance, and I think there are few things more unfavourable in this way than a talkative diſpoſition. If the firſt time I am in company, eſpecially with a young man, he talks inceſſantly, and takes the whole converſation to himſelf, I ſhall hardly be brought to have a good opinion of him, whether what he ſays be good or evil, ſenſe or nonſenſe. There are ſome perſons, who, one might ſay, give away ſo much wiſdom in their ſpeech, that they leave none behind to govern their actions.

But the chief danger of an ungoverned tongue, is, that it kindles the fire of contention among others, and makes enemies to a man's ſelf. Solomon ſays, "Where no tale-bearer is, the ſtrife ceaſeth." A little experience will ſhew you how unſafe it is to

uſe much freedom in ſpeech with abſent perſons. In that caſe you put yourſelf wholly in the power of thoſe that hear you, and are in danger, not only from their treachery or malice, but from their miſtakes, ignorance, and imprudence. Perhaps it would be too rigid to ſay, that you ought never to ſpeak to a man's pejudice in his abſence, what you would be unwilling to ſay in his preſence. Some exceptions to this rule might eaſily be conceived. But both prudence and candour require that you ſhould be very reſerved in this reſpect, and either adhere ſtrictly to the rule or be ſure that good reaſons will juſtify a departure from it.

This will be a very proper place to give you ſome directions, as to the moſt proper conduct, when you ſuffer from the tongues of others. Many and grievous are the complaints of what men ſuffer from the envenomed ſhafts of envy and malice. And there certainly is a ſtrong diſpoſition in ſome to invent, and in many to believe ſlanderous falſehoods. The prevalence of party, in religion or politics, never fails to produce a plentiful crop of this poiſonous weed. One of the moſt important rules upon this ſubject is, that when an accuſation is in any degree well-founded, or ſuſpicious appearances have given any occaſion for it, the firſt duty is to reform what is really wrong, and keep at a diſtance from the diſputed limit.

This will bring good out of evil, and turn an injury into a benefit. But in caſes, as it may often happen, when the ſlander is perfectly groundleſs, I hold it to be in general the beſt way wholly to deſpiſe it. Time and the power of truth, will of

themſelves do juſtice in almoſt every caſe of this kind; but if you ſhew an impatience under it, a diſpoſition to reſent it, or a ſolicitude to refute it, the far greateſt part of mankind will believe it, not the leſs, but the more. If ſlander were a plant or an animal, I would ſay it was of a very ſtrange nature, for that it would very eaſily die, but could not eaſily be killed. It diſcovers a greatneſs of mind and a conſcious dignity, to deſpiſe ſlanders, which of itſelf commands reſpect; whereas to be either offended or diſtreſſed by them, ſhews a weakneſs not amiable, whether the accuſation be true or falſe.

This rule I do not ſay, is wholly without exception. There may be caſes where vindications may be neceſſary and effectual, but they are not many. And I think I have ſeen in the courſe of my life, reaſon to make the following diſtinction. If the accuſation or ſlander be ſpecial, and relate to a particular fact, fixed by time, place and other circumſtances, and if it be either wholly falſe, or eſſentially miſtaken in its nature and tendency, the matter may be explained, and juſtice may be done. But if it be a general character, that happens to be imputed to a man, he ought to attempt no refutation of it, but by conduct: the more he complains of it, the more he ſpeaks of it, the more he denies it, it will be the more believed. For example, if it be affirmed that a man ſpoke profanely in a certain company, at a certain place and time, when he was not preſent at all, it may be eaſily and completely refuted: but if he is accuſed of being proud, contentious, covetous, or deceitful, although theſe accuſations are pretended to be ſupported by a train

of facts, it is better to let them wholly alone, and suffer his conduct to speak for itself. There are instances in history, of accusations brought with much plausibility, and urged with great vehemence, which yet have been either from the beginning disbelieved, or by time confuted; which occasioned the Latin proverb, *Magna est veritas et prævalebit.*

All the above-mentioned particulars may be said to be the happy effects of wisdom and benevolence united; or rather, perhaps, in the light in which they have been stated to you, they are chiefly the proper fruits of that wisdom which is "profitable to direct." But I must add another advice, which is the immediate effect of benevolence and good-will; that is, be ready to assist others, and do good as you have opportunity. As every thing is liable to be abused, sometimes the maxims of prudence take a wrong direction, and close the heart against impressions of sympathy and tenderness towards others in distress. Sometimes indeed, the coolness and composure of spirit, and that self-command, which is the effect of reflection and experience, is mistaken for a callous and unfeeling heart, though it is a very different thing. To give way to the agitation of passion, even under the finest feelings, is the way to prevent, instead of promoting usefulness. A parent overwhelmed with surprise and anxiety, at a calamitous accident that has befallen a child, shall be incapable either of reflection or activity, and shall sometimes even need the assistance which he ought to give. But independently of this, there are certainly some persons who contract a habit of indifference as to the wants or desires of others, and are not willing to

put themſelves to any inconvenience, unleſs their own particular concerns may be promoted at the ſame time.

In oppoſition to this, I mean to recommend to you a diſpoſition to oblige, not merely by civil expreſſions, and an affable deportment, but by taking a real intereſt in the affairs of others. Be not unwilling to lend your advice, your aſſiſtance, your intereſt, to thoſe that need them. Thoſe who cannot ſpare pecuniary aſſiſtance, may do many acts of valuable friendſhip. Let every neighbour perceive that you are not ready to quarrel needleſsly, nor inſiſt pertinaciouſly on trifles; and if you live to obtain credit and influence, let them be employed to aſſiſt the deſerving of every claſs. If you undertake to do the buſineſs of others, attend to it with the ſame fidelity, and if poſſible, with greater punctuality than you would to your own. Some are ready to excuſe or juſtify a contrary conduct, by complaining of the ingratitude or injuſtice of mankind. But in my opinion, theſe complaints are contrary to truth and experience. There may be many particular perſons both ungrateful and unjuſt; but in the world in general, there will be found a clearneſs of diſcernment, and an exactneſs of retribution. Our Saviour tells us, with reſpect to one fault, that of raſh judging, what is equally true as to injuries of every kind, "with what meaſure ye mete, it ſhall be meaſured to you again; good meaſure preſſed down and ſhaken together, and running over, ſhall men give into your boſom." Luke vi. 38.

This, in my opinion, may and ought to be underſtood both ways. As the churliſh Nabal gene-

rally meets with his match, ſo perſons of a humane and friendly diſpoſition ſhall reap the fruits of it to them or theirs. The truth is, the diſpoſition itſelf is not in its perfection, but when there is no regard to an immediate return. If you give, looking for a ſpeedy recompenſe, it is not giving but ſelling. You may however, ſafely truſt to the promiſe of God: "Caſt thy bread upon the waters, for thou ſhalt find it after many days." Eccl. xi. 1.

I have known many inſtances of kindneſſes that were both remembered and requited, after they had been long forgotten by him who beſtowed them. Nay, ſometimes they may be repaid in another generation. It is no inconſiderable legacy for a man to leave to his children, that he had always been a friend to others, and never refuſed his aſſiſtance to thoſe who ſtood in need of it.

It will not be an improper place here to introduce a few words upon a ſubject, which has been often handled by writers of the firſt claſs: I mean private friendſhip. Some writers againſt religion, have actually made it an objection againſt Chriſtianity, that it does not recommend private friendſhip, or the love of our country. If this were true, it would be no fault, becauſe the univerſal benevolence recommended by the goſpel, includes all private affections, when they are conſiſtent with it, and is far ſuperior to them when they are contrary to it. But in fact, the inſtances of private friendſhip mentioned and alluded to in ſcripture, are a ſufficient recommendation of it; and even our bleſſed Saviour himſelf is ſaid to have diſtinguiſhed the youngeſt of his diſciples with particular affection. I will therefore obſerve, with moſt authors,

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that there is no true friendſhip, but what is founded upon virtuous principles, and directed to virtuous purpoſes. To love a perſon who is not worthy of love, is not a virtue, but an error. Neither is there any dependance to be placed in trying caſes, upon perſons unprincipled at bottom. There never was a true friend, who was not an honeſt man. But beſides this important truth, it is further to be obſerved, that there is a ſpecies of friendſhip which is neither founded on virtue nor vice, but mere weakneſs of mind. Some perſons, having no reſources in themſelves, are obliged to have recourſe to ſome other, upon whom they may lean, and without whom they ſeem as if they could neither think, act, nor even exiſt. This ſort of friendſhip is to be ſeen particularly in princes and perſons of high rank, and is generally called favoritiſm; but the ſame thing may be obſerved in all ranks, though, in the lower, it is not ſo conſpicuous. We may ſay of it, that it is like ſome of thoſe plants that are falſe and ſpurious in their kind, which have ſome of the appearances, but want the moſt valuable and eſſential qualities of thoſe that are genuine. Such friendſhips are commonly contracted by caprice or accident, and uncertain in their duration, being liable to be diſſolved by the ſame means. Valuable friendſhip is the reſult of judgment as well as affection: it is one of the greateſt comforts of life as well as one of the greateſt ornaments to human nature, and its genuineneſs may be diſcerned by the following mark: that though it is particular, it is not excluſive. When there is a great, but virtuous attachment to

a perſon who deſerves it, it will make a man not leſs, but more friendly to all others, as opportunity or circumſtances ſhall call him to ſerve them.

You will perhaps be ſurpriſed that as I have ſo often expreſſed a deſire of your being accompliſhed in every reſpect, that I have heretofore ſaid nothing or but little on that politeneſs and grace in behaviour, which is ſo much talked of, and which, in ſome late writings, has been ſo highly extolled. What has been already explained to you, I hope will lay the foundation for the moſt ſolid, valuable and durable politeneſs. Think of others as reaſon and religion require you, and treat them as it is your duty to do, and you will not be far from a well-poliſhed behaviour. As to any thing further, that is external in mode and propriety of carriage, it can never be learned but by intercourſe with the beſt company. As to the writings above referred to, the chief of which are Rochefoucault's Maxims and Cheſterfield's Letters, I think of them as of many other free writings, that when viewed properly, that may be as uſeful, as by being viewed otherwiſe, they are generally pernicious. They contain a digeſted ſyſtem of hypocriſy, and betray ſuch pride and ſelf-ſufficiency, and ſuch hatred or contempt of mankind, as may well be an antidote againſt the poiſon which they mean to convey. Nay, one would think the publication of ſuch ſentiments is ridiculous, becauſe it is telling you that they deſire to be polite, and at the ſame time that this politeneſs conſiſts in taking you by the weak ſide, and diſplaying their own addreſs by over-reaching yours.

I muſt alſo obſerve, that ſuch writings give in general, a very unjuſt as well as diſhonourable view of nature and mankind. I remember, indeed, Dean Swift ſays,

> " As Rochefoucault his maxims drew
> " From nature, I believe them true."

What muſt I ſay to this? Shall I ſay that he did not draw his maxims from nature? I will not, becauſe I think he did. Am I obliged then to admit them to be true? By no means. It is nature, but it is juſt ſuch a view of nature, as a man without principle muſt take. It is in himſelf, that all the error and exaggeration is to be found.

Thoſe who diſcover an univerſal jealouſy, and indiſcriminate contempt for mankind in general, give very little reaſon to think well of themſelves. Probably men are neither ſo good as they pretend, nor ſo bad as they are often thought to be. At any rate, candour in ſentiment as well as conduct, as it is an important duty of religion, ſo it is a wiſe maxim for the conduct of life; and I believe theſe two things are very ſeldom if ever found either ſeparate from, or oppoſed to each other.

The laſt advice that I ſhall offer you, is to preſerve a ſacred and inviolable regard to ſincerity and truth. Thoſe who have received their education here, or at leaſt who have completed it, muſt know how much pains have been taken to eſtabliſh the univerſal and unalterable obligation of truth. This is not however mentioned now to introduce the general ſubject, or to ſhew the guilt, folly and danger of deliberate intereſted falſehood, but to warn you againſt the ſmaller breaches of truth now ſo very common, ſuch as want of punctuality in ap

pointments, breach of promiſe in ſmall matters, officious falſehoods, that is, deceiving children, ſick perſons or others for their good; jocular deceptions, which are not intended to continue long, or be materially hurtful to others. Not one of theſe is without ſin before God, and they are much more hurtful than is commonly ſuppoſed. So very ſacred a thing indeed is truth, that the very ſhadow of departure from it is to be avoided. Suppoſe a man only to expreſs his preſent purpoſe as to futurity, for example, to ſay he will go to ſuch a place to-morrow, though there is no proper obligation given, nor any right to require performance, yet if he does ſo often, he will acquire the character of levity and unſteadineſs, which will operate much to his diſadvantage. Let me therefore recommend to you a ſtrict, univerſal and ſcrupulous regard to truth—It will give dignity to your character—it will put order into your affairs; it will excite the moſt unbounded confidence, ſo that whether your view be your own intereſt, or the ſervice of others, it promiſes you the moſt aſſured ſucceſs. I am alſo perſuaded, that there is no virtue that has a more powerful influence upon every other, and certainly there is none by which you can draw nearer to God himſelf, whoſe diſtinguiſhing character, is, that he will not, and he cannot lie.

A

# SERIOUS INQUIRY

INTO THE

## NATURE AND EFFECTS

OF THE

# STAGE;

BEING AN ATTEMPT TO SHEW, THAT CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUPPORT OF A PUBLIC THEATRE, IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE CHARACTER OF A CHRISTIAN.

THE reader will probably conjecture, and therefore I do readily acknowledge, that what gave occaſion both to the writing, and publiſhing the enſuing treatiſe, was the new tragedy of *Douglas*, lately acted in the theatre at Edinburgh. This, univerſal uncontradicted fame ſays, is the work of a miniſter of the Church of Scotland. One of that character and office employing his time in writing for the ſtage, every one will allow, is a very new and extraordinary event. In one reſpect neither author nor actors have ſuffered any thing from this circumſtance: for doubtleſs, it contributed its ſhare in procuring that run upon the repreſentation, which continued for ſeveral days. Natural curioſity prompted many to make trial, whether there was any difference between a play

written by a clergyman, and one of another author. And a concern for the fate of such a person excited the zeal and diligence of friends, to do all in their power to procure a full house, that the bold adventurer might be treated with respect and honour.

Some resolutions of the presbytery of Edinburgh seem to threaten, that public notice will be taken of this author and his associates by their superiors in the church. Whether this will be carried on, and if it be, whether they will be approved or censured, and if the last, to what degree, I pretend not to foretel. But one thing is certain, that it hath been, and will be, the subject of much thought and conversation among the laity of all ranks, and that it must have a very great influence upon the state of religion among us, in this part of the nation. That this influence will be for the better, though I resolve to examine the subject with all impartiality, I confess, I see little ground to hope. There is no doubt that it will be condemned by the great plurality of those who go by the appellation of the stricter sort. With them, it will bring a great reproach upon the Church of Scotland, as containing one minister who writes for the stage, and many who think it no crime to attend the representation. It is true, no other consequences are to be apprehended from their displeasure, than the weakest of them being provoked to unchristian resentment, or tempted to draw rash and general conclusions from the conduct of a few to the character of the whole, or perhaps some of them separating from the established church, none of which effects of late have been much either feared or

ſhunned. However, even on this account, it were to be wiſhed, either that it had never happened, or that it could be ſhewn, to the conviction of unprejudiced minds, that it was a juſt and commendable action.

But, to be ſure, the chief danger is, that in caſe it be really a bad thing, it muſt give very great offences, in the Scripture ſenſe of that word, to thoſe who are moſt apt to take it, *viz.* ſuch as have leaſt religion, or none at all. An offence is a ſtumbling-block over which the weak and unſtedfaſt are in danger of falling; that is to ſay, it emboldens them to commit, and hardens them in the practice of ſin. Now, if the ſtage is unlawful or dangerous to a Chriſtian, thoſe who are by inclination ſo addicted to it that it is already difficult to convince them of their error, muſt be greatly confirmed in this error, by the example and countenance of ſuch as call themſelves miniſters of Chriſt. It has accordingly already occaſioned more diſcourſe among the gay part of the world, in defence or commendation of the ſtage, than paſſed perhaps for ſome years preceding this event.

Nothing therefore can be more ſeaſonable at this time, or neceſſary for the public good, than a careful and accurate diſcuſſion of this queſtion, whether ſupporting and encouraging ſtage-plays, by writing, acting, or attending them, is conſiſtent, or inconſiſtent, with the character of a Chriſtian? It is to no purpoſe to confine the inquiry to this, Whether a miniſter is not appearing in an improper light, and miſapplying his time and talents, when he dedicates them to the ſervice of the ſtage? That point

would probably be given up by moſt, and thoſe who would deny it do not merit a confutation. But if the matter is reſted here, it will be conſidered only as a ſmaller miſdemeanor, and though treated, or even condemned as ſuch, it will ſtill have the bad effect (upon ſuppoſition of theatrical amuſements being wrong and ſinful) of greatly promoting them, though we ſeem to be already as much given to them as even worldly conſiderations will allow.

The ſelf-denying apologies common with authors, of their being ſenſible of their unfitneſs for the taſk they undertake, their doing it to ſtir up a better hand, and ſo on, I wholly paſs, having never read any of them with approbation. Prudence is good, and I would not willingly loſe ſight of it, but zeal and concern for the glory of God, and faithfulneſs to the ſouls of others, are duties equally neceſſary in their place, but much more rare. How far I am ſenſible of my own unfitneſs for treating this ſubject, and of the reputation that is riſked by attempting it, the world is not obliged to believe upon my own teſtimony; but in whatever degree it be, it is greatly overbalanced at preſent, by a view of the declining ſtate of religion among us, the prevalence of national ſins, and the danger of deſolating judgments.

It is ſome diſcouragement in this attempt, that it is very uncertain whether many of thoſe, for whoſe ſakes it is chiefly intended, and who ſtand moſt in need of information upon the ſubject, will take the pains to look into it. Such a levity of ſpirit prevails in this age, that very few perſons of faſhion will read or conſider any thing that is writ-

ten in a grave or ſerious ſtyle. Whoever will look into the monthly catalogues of books, publiſhed in Britain for ſome years paſt, may be convinced of this at one glance. What an immenſe proportion do romances, under the titles of lives, adventures, memoirs, hiſtories, &c. bear to any other ſort of production in this age? Perhaps therefore it may be thought that it would have been more proper to have gratified the public taſte, by raiſing up ſome allegorical ſtructure, and handling this ſubject in the way of wit and humour; eſpecially as it ſeems to be a modern principle, that ridicule is the teſt of truth, and as there ſeems to be ſo large a fund for mirth, in the character of a ſtage-playing prieſt. But, though, I deny not the lawfulneſs of uſing ridicule in ſome caſes, or even its propriety here, yet I am far from thinking it is the teſt of truth. It ſeems to be more proper for correction than for inſtruction; and though it may be fit enough to whip an offender, it is not unuſual, nor unſuitable, firſt to expoſtulate a little with him, and ſhew him that he deſerves it. Beſides, every man's talent is not equally fit for it, and indeed, now the matter ſeems to have been carried beyond a jeſt, and to require a very ſerious conſideration.

There is alſo, beſides ſome diſcouragment, a real difficulty in entering on this diſquiſition. It will be hard to know in what manner to reaſon, or on what principles to build. It were eaſy to ſhew the unlawfulneſs of ſtage-plays, by ſuch arguments as would appear concluſive to thoſe who already hate both them and their ſupporters: but it is not eaſy to make it appear to thoſe who chiefly frequent

them, becauſe they will both applaud and juſtify ſome of the very things that others look upon as the worſt effects of the practice, and will deny the very principles on which they are condemned. The truth is, it is our having different views of the nature of religion, that cauſes different opinions upon this ſubject. For many ages there was no debate upon it at all. There were players, but they did not pretend to be Chriſtians themſelves, and they had neither countenance nor ſupport from any who did. Whereas now, there are abundance of advocates for the lawfulneſs, ſome for the uſefulneſs, of plays; not that the ſtage is become more pure, but that Chriſtians are become leſs ſo, and have lowered the ſtandard or meaſure requiſite to attain and preſerve that character.

But there is ſtill another difficulty, that whoever undertakes to write againſt plays, though the provocation is given by what they are, is yet always called upon to attack them, not as they are, but as they might be. A writer on this ſubject is actually reduced to the neceſſity of fighting with a ſhadow, of maintaining a combat with an ideal or imaginary ſort of drama, which never yet exiſted, but which the defenders of the cauſe form by way of ſuppoſition, and which ſhall appear, in fact, in that happy future age, which ſhall ſee, what theſe gentlemen are pleaſed to ſtyle, a well regulated ſtage. However little ſupport may ſeem to be given by this to a vicious and corrupted ſtage there is no attender of plays but, when he hears this chimera defended, imagines it is his own cauſe that is eſpouſed, and with great compoſure and ſelf-ſatisfaction, continues

his practice. A conduct not less absurd, than if one who was expressly assured a certain dish of meat before him was poisoned, should answer thus, All meat is not poisoned, and therefore I may eat this with safety.

It is very plain, that were men but seriously disposed, and without prejudice desiring the knowledge of their duty, it would not be necessary, in order to show the unlawfulness of the stage, as it now is, to combat it in its imaginary reformed state. Such a reformation, were not men by the prevalence of vicious and corrupt affections, in love with it, even in its present condition, would have been long ago given up as a hopeless and visionary project, and the whole trade or employment detested, on account of the abuses that had always adhered to it. But since all advocates for the stage have and do still defend it in this manner, by forming an idea of it separate from its evil qualities; since they defend it so far with success, that many who would otherwise abstain, do, upon this very account, allow themselves in attending the theatre sometimes, to their own hurt and that of others: and, as I am convinced on the most mature deliberation, that the reason why there never was a well regulated stage, in fact, is because it cannot be, the nature of the thing not admitting of it; I will endeavour to shew, that PUBLIC THEATRICAL REPRESENTATIONS, either tragedy or comedy, are in their general nature or in their best possible state, unlawful, contrary to the purity of our religion: and that writing, acting or attending them, is inconsistent with the character of a Christian. If this be done with success, it

will give great weight to the reflections which ſhall be added upon the aggravation of the crime, conſidering the circumſtances that at preſent attend the practice.

But, though I have thus far complied with the unreaſonable terms impoſed by the advocates for this amuſement, they muſt not proceed to any higher demand, nor expect, becauſe they have prevailed to have plays conſidered in the way that they themſelves deſire, that therefore the ſame thing muſt be done by religion, and that it muſt be lowered down to the deſcriptions they are ſometimes pleaſed to give of it. I will by no means attack plays upon the principles of modern relaxed morality. In that caſe, to be ſure, it would be a loſt cauſe. If ſome late writers on the ſubject of morals be permitted to determine what are the ingredients that muſt enter into the compoſition of a good man, that good man, it is agreed, may much more probably be found in the play-houſe than in any other place. But what belongs to the character of a Chriſtian muſt be taken from the holy Scriptures, the word of the living God. Notwithſtanding therefore, that through the great degeneracy of the age, and very culpable relaxation of diſcipline, not a few continue to be called Chriſtians, who are a reproach to the name, and ſupport and countenance one another in many practices contrary to the purity of the Chriſtian profeſſion, I ſhall beg leave ſtill to recur to the unerring ſtandard, and to conſider, not what many nominal Chriſtians are, but what every real Chriſtian ought to be.

In ſo doing I think I ſhall reaſon juſtly; and at

the ſame time it is my reſolution, not only to ſpeak the ſenſe, but, as often as poſſible, the very language and phraſes of the Scripture, and of our pious fathers. Theſe are either become venerable to me for their antiquity, or they are much fitter for expreſſing the truths of the goſpel, and delineating the character and duty of a diſciple of Chriſt, than any that have been invented in latter times. As the growth or decay of vegetable nature is often ſo gradual as to be inſenſible; ſo in the moral world, verbal alterations, which are counted as nothing, do often introduce real changes, which are firmly eſtabliſhed before their approach is ſo much as ſuſpected. Were the ſtyle, not only of ſome modern eſſays, but of ſome modern ſermons, to be introduced upon this ſubject, it would greatly weaken the argument, though no other alteration ſhould be made. Should we every where put virtue for holineſs, honour, or even moral ſenſe for conſcience, improvement of the heart for ſanctification, the oppoſition between ſuch things and theatrical entertainments would not appear half ſo ſenſible.

By taking up the argument in the light now propoſed, I am ſaved in a great meaſure, from the repetition of what has been written by other authors on the ſubject. But let it be remembered, that they have clearly and copiouſly ſhewn the corruption and impurity of the ſtage and its adherents, ſince its firſt inſtitution, and that both in the heathen and Chriſtian world. They have made it undeniably appear, that it was oppoſed and condemned by the beſt and wiſeſt men, both heathens and

Chriſtians in every age *. Its very defenders do all pretend to blame the abuſe of it. They do indeed alledge that this abuſe is not eſſential to it, but may be ſeparated from it; however, all of them, ſo far as I have ſeen, repreſent this ſeparation as only poſſible or future; they never attempt to aſſign

* Particularly at Athens, where it firſt had its birth, both tragedy and comedy were ſoon abolished by public authority; and among the Romans, though this and other public ſhows were permitted in a certain degree, yet ſo cautious were that wiſe people of ſuffering them to be frequent, that they did not permit any public theatre, when occaſionally erected, to continue above a certain number of days. Even that erected by M. Scaurus, which is ſaid to have coſt ſo immenſe a ſum as a million ſterling, was ſpeedily taken down. Pompey the Great was the firſt who had power and credit enough to get a theatre continued.

The opinion of Seneca may be ſeen in the following paſſage:—"Nihil eſt tam damnoſum bonis moribus, quam in aliquo ſpectaculo deſidere. Tunc enim per voluptatem facilius vitia ſurrepunt."

As to the primitive Chriſtians, ſee Conſtit. Apoſt. lib. 8. cap. 32. where actors and ſtage-players are enumerated among thoſe who are not to be admitted to baptiſm. Many different councils appoint that they ſhall renounce their arts before they be admitted, and if they return to them ſhall be excommunicated. Tertullian de Spectaculis, cap. 22. obſerves, That the heathens themſelves marked them with infamy, and excluded them from all honours and dignity. To the ſame purpoſe ſee Aug. de Civ. Del. lib. 2. cap. 14. "Actores poeticarum fabularum removent a ſocietate civitatis—ab honoribus omnibus repellunt homines ſcenicos."

The opinion of moderns is well known, few Chriſtian writers of any eminence having failed to pronounce ſentence againſt the ſtage.

any æra in which it could be defended as it then was, or could be affirmed to be more profitable than hurtful. Some writers do mention a few particular plays of which they give their approbation. But these have never yet, in any age or place, amounted to such a number, as to keep one society of players in constant employment, without a mixture of many more that are confessedly pernicious. The only reason of bringing this in view at present when it is not to be insisted on, is that it ought to procure a fair and candid hearing to this attempt to prove, That the stage, after the greatest improvement of which it is capable, is still inconsistent with the purity of the Christian profession. It is a strong presumptive evidence in favour of this assertion, that, after so many years trial, such improvement has never actually taken place.

It is perhaps also proper here to obviate a pretence, in which the advocates of the stage greatly glory, that there is no express prohibition of it to be found in scripture. I think a countryman of our own * has given good reasons to believe, that the apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians, chap. v. verse 4. by "filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting," intended to prohibit the plays that were then in use. He also thinks it probable, that the word Κωμοις used in more places than one, and translated "revelling," points at the same thing. Whether his conjectures are just or not, it is very certain that these, and many other passages, forbid the abuses of the stage; and if these abuses be inseparable from

* The late Mr. Anderson.

it, as there is reaſon to believe, there needed no other prohibition of them to every Chriſtian. Nay, if they never had been ſeparated from it till that time, it was ſufficient: and it would be idle to expect that the ſcripture ſhould determine this problematical point, Whether they would ever be ſo in any after age. To aſk that there ſhould be produced a prohibition of the ſtage, as a ſtage, univerſally, is to preſcribe to the Holy Ghoſt, and to require that the ſcripture ſhould not only forbid ſin, but every form in which the reſtleſs and changeable diſpoſitions of men ſhall think fit to be guilty of it, and every name by which they ſhall think proper to call it. I do not find in ſcripture any expreſs prohibition of maſquerades, routs, and drums; and yet I have not the leaſt doubt, that the aſſemblies called by theſe names, are contrary to the will of God, and as bad, if not worſe, than the common and ordinary entertainments of the ſtage.

In order to make this inquiry as exact and accurate as poſſible, and that the ſtrength or weakneſs of the arguments on either ſide, may be clearly perceived, it will be proper to ſtate diſtinctly, what we underſtand by the ſtage, or ſtage-plays, when it is affirmed, that in their moſt improved and beſt regulated ſtate, they are unlawful to Chriſtians. This is the more neceſſary, that there is a great indiſtinctneſs and ambiguity in the language uſed by thoſe who, in writing or converſation, undertake to defend it. They analyze and divide it into parts, and take ſometimes one part, ſometimes another, as will beſt ſuit their purpoſe. They aſk, what there can be unlawful in the ſtage abſtractedly conſidered?

Comedy is expoſing the folly of vice, and pointing out the ridiculous part of every character. And is not this commendable? Is not ridicule a noble means of diſcountenancing vice? And is not the uſe of it warranted by the ſatire and irony that is to be found in the holy ſcriptures? Tragedy, they ſay, is promoting the ſame end in a way more grave and ſolemn. It is a moral lecture, or a moral picture, in which virtue appears to great advantage. What is hiſtory itſelf, but repreſenting the characters of men as they actually were, and plays repreſent them as they may be. In their perfection, plays are as like hiſtory and nature, as the poet's art and actor's ſkill can make them. Is it then the circumſtance of their being written in dialogue, that renders them criminal? who will pretend that? Is it that they are publicly repeated or acted over? Will any one pretend, that it is a crime to perſonate a character in any caſe, even where no deceit is intended? Then farewel parables, figures of ſpeech, and the whole oratorial art. Is it a ſin to look upon the repreſentation? Then it muſt be a ſin to look upon the world, which is the original, of which plays are the copy.

This is the way which thoſe who appear in defence of the ſtage ordinarily take, and it is little better than if one ſhould ſay, What is a ſtage-play? It is nothing elſe abſtractedly conſidered but a company of men and women talking together; Where is the harm in that? What hinders them from talking piouſly and profitably, as well as wickedly or hurtfully? But, rejecting this method of reaſoning as unjuſt and inconcluſive, let it be obſerved, that thoſe who plead for the lawfulneſs of the ſtage in

any country, however well regulated, plead for what implies, not by accident, but eſſentially and of neceſſity the following things, (1.) Such a number of plays as will furniſh an habitual courſe of repreſentations, with ſuch changes as the love of variety in human nature neceſſarily requires. (2.) Theſe plays of ſuch a kind, as to procure an audience of voluntary ſpectators, who are able and willing to pay for being ſo entertained. (3.) A company of hired players, who have this as their only buſineſs and occupation, that they may give themſelves wholly to it, and be expert in the performance. (4.) The repreſentation muſt be ſo frequent as that the profits may defray the expence of the apparatus, and maintain thoſe who follow this buſineſs. They muſt alſo be maintained in that meaſure of luxury, or elegance, if you pleaſe, which their way of life, and the thoughts to which they are accuſtomed, muſt make them deſire and require. It is a thing impracticable to maintain a player at the ſame expence as you maintain a peaſant.

Now all theſe things do, and muſt enter into the idea of a well regulated ſtage; and if any defend it without ſuppoſing this, he hath no adverſary that I know of. Without theſe there may be poets, or there may be plays, but there cannot be a playhouſe. It is in vain then to go about to ſhew, that there have been an inſtance or two, or may be, of treatiſes wrote in the form of plays, that are unexceptionable. It were eaſy to ſhew very great faults in ſome of thoſe moſt univerſally applauded; but this is unneceſſary. I believe it is very poſſible to write a treatiſe in the form of a dialogue, in which

the general rules of the drama are obſerved, which ſhall be as holy and ſerious, as any ſermon that ever was preached or printed. Neither is there any apparent impoſſibility in getting different perſons to aſſume the different characters, and rehearſe it in ſociety. But it may be ſafely affirmed, that if all plays were of that kind, and human nature to continue in its preſent ſtate, the doors of the play-houſe would ſhut of their own accord, becauſe nobody would demand acceſs *; unleſs there were an act of parliament to force attendance, and even in that caſe, as much pains would probably be taken to evade the law obliging to attend, as are now taken to evade thoſe that command us to abſtain. The fair and plain ſtate of this queſtion then is, Whether it is poſſible or practicable in the preſent ſtate of human nature, to have the above ſyſtem of things under ſo good a regulation, as to make the erecting and countenancing the ſtage agreeable to the will of God, and conſiſtent with the purity of the Chriſtian profeſſion.

And here let us conſider a little what is the primary, and immediate intention of the ſtage, Whe-

* This furniſhes an easy answer to what is remarked by some in favour of plays, that several eminent Christians have endeavoured to supplant bad plays by writing good ones; as Gregory Nazienzen, a father of the church and a person of great piety, and our countryman Buchanan. But did ever these plays come into repute? Were they formerly, or are they now acted upon the stage? the fate of their works proves that these good men judged wrong in attempting to reform the stage, and that the great majority of Christians acted more wisely who were for laying it wholly aside.

ther it be for amuſement and recreation, or for in ſtruction to make men wiſe and good. Perhaps, indeed, the greateſt part will chooſe to compound theſe two purpoſes together, and ſay it is for both; for amuſement immediately, and for improvement ultimately, that it inſtructs by pleaſing, and reforms by ſtealth. The patrons of a well regulated ſtage have it no doubt in their power to profeſs any of theſe ends in it they pleaſe, if it is equally capable of them all; and therefore in one part or other of this diſcourſe, it muſt be conſidered in every one of theſe lights. But as it is of moment, becauſe of ſome of the arguments to be afterwards produced, let the reader be pleaſed to conſider, how far recreation and amuſement enter into the nature of the ſtage, and are, not only immediately and primarily, but chiefly and ultimately, intended by it.

If the general nature of it, or the end propoſed from it when well regulated, can be any way determined from its firſt inſtitution, and the ſubſequent practice, it ſeems plainly to point at amuſement. The earlieſt productions of that kind that are now extant, are evidently incapable of any other uſe, and hardly even of that to a perſon of any taſte or judgment *. They uſually accompanied the feaſts

* This is confeſſed by a defender of the ſtage who ſays, "Such of the comedies before his (that is Meander's) time, as have been preſerved to us, are generally very poor pieces, not ſo much ludicrous as ridiculous, even a mountebank's merry andrew would be hiſſed now-a-days, for ſuch puerilities as we ſee abounding in Ariſtophanes." Rem. on Anderſon's Poſitions concerning the unlawfulneſs of ſtage-plays, page 8th.

of the ancients in the houſes of the rich and opulent *, and were particularly uſed in times of public rejoicing. They have indeed generally been conſidered, in all ages, as intended for entertainment. A modern author of high rank and reputation †, who would not willingly hurt the cauſe, conſiders them in this light, and this alone, and repreſents their improvement, not as lying in their having a greater moral tendency, but in the perfection of the poet's art, and the refinement of the taſte of the audience. It is only of late that men have begun to dignify them with a higher title. Formerly they were ever conſidered as an indulgence of pleaſure and an article of luxury, but now they are exalted into ſchools of virtue, and repreſented as bulwarks againſt vice. It is probable, moſt readers will be apt to ſmile when they hear them ſo called, and to ſay to their defenders, This is but overdoing, preſerve them to us as innocent amuſements, and we ſhall not much contend about uſefulneſs. It is indeed but an evidence of the diſtreſs of the cauſe; for their advocates only take up this plea when they are unable to anſwer the arguments againſt them upon any other footing. It may alſo appear that they are deſigned for amuſement, if we conſider who have been the perſons in all ages who have attended them, *viz.* the rich, the young, and the gay, thoſe who live in pleaſure, and the very buſineſs of whoſe lives is amuſement.

* Plut. de Glor. Athen. & Sympos. lib. 7. quest. 8. "As for the new comedy, it is so necessary an ingredient of all public entertainments, that so to speak, one may as well make a feast without wine, as without Meander."

† Shaftesbury.

But not to inſiſt on theſe circumſtances, I think it is plain from the nature of the thing, that the immediate intention of plays is to pleaſe, whatever effects may be pretended to flow aſterwards, or by accident, from this pleaſure. They conſiſt in an exact imitation of nature, and the conformity of the perſonated to real characters. This is the great aim, and the great perfection, both of the poet and of the actors. Now this imitation, of itſelf, gives great pleaſure to the ſpectator, whether the actions repreſented are good or bad. And, in itſelf conſidered, it gives only pleaſure; for the beauty of the imitation, as ſuch, hath no moral influence, nor any connection with morality, but what it may derive in a diſtant way from the nature of the actions which the poet or actors chooſe to repreſent, or the ſpectators are willing to ſee. Every perſon who thinks impartially, may be from this convinced, that to pleaſe, or attempt to do ſo, is eſſential to the ſtage, and its firſt, or rather its main deſign; how far it pollutes or purifies is accidental, and muſt depend upon the ſkill and honeſty of its regulators and managers.

Having thus prepared the way, the following arguments are humbly offered to the conſideration of every ſerious perſon, to ſhew, that a public theatre is inconſiſtent with the purity of the Chriſtain profeſſion: which if they do not to all appear to be each of them ſingly concluſive, will I hope, when taken together, ſufficiently evince the truth of the propoſition.

In the *firſt* place. If it be conſidered as an amuſement, it is improper, and not ſuch as any

Chriſtian may lawfully uſe. Here we muſt begin by laying it down as a fundamental principle, that all men are bound ſupremely to love, and habitually to ſerve God; that is to ſay, to take his law as the rule, and his glory as the end, not of one, but of all their actions. No man, at any time or place is, nor can be, abſolved from this obligation. Every real Chriſtian lives under an habitual ſenſe of it. I know this expreſſion, aiming at the glory of God, is called a cant phraſe, and is deſpiſed and derided by worldly men. It were eaſy, however, to vindicate it from reaſon; but it will ſuffice, to all thoſe for whoſe uſe this diſcourſe is intended, to ſay, it is a truth taught and repeated in the ſacred oracles, that all things were made for, that all things ſhall finally tend to, and therefore, that all intelligent creatures ſhould ſupremely and uniformly aim at the glory of God.

Now, we glorify God by cultivating holy diſpoſitions, and doing pious and uſeful actions. Recreation is an intermiſſion of duty, and is only neceſſary becauſe of our weakneſs; it muſt be ſome action indifferent in its nature, which becomes lawful and uſeful from its tendency to refreſh the mind and invigorate it for duties of more importance. The uſe of recreation is preciſely the ſame as the uſe of ſleep; though they differ in this, that there is but one way in which ſleep becomes ſinful, *viz.* by exceſs, whereas there are ten thouſand ways in which recreations become ſinful. It is needleſs to produce paſſages of Scripture to verify the above aſſertion concerning our obligation to glorify God. It is the language of the whole, and is particularly applied to indifferent actions by the apoſtle Paul,

1 Cor. x. 13. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, "or whatſoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

If there were on the minds of men in general, a juſt ſenſe of this their obligation, ſtage-plays, nay, and a thouſand other amuſements now in uſe, would never have been heard of. The truth is, the need of amuſement is much leſs than people commonly apprehend, and, where it is not neceſſary, it muſt be ſinful. Thoſe who ſtand in need of recreation may be divided into two ſorts, ſuch as are employed in bodily labour, and ſuch as have their ſpirits often exhauſted by ſtudy and application of mind. As to the firſt of theſe, a mere ceſſation from labour is ſufficient for refreſhment, and indeed of itſelf gives great pleaſure, unleſs when the appetites are inflamed and irritated by frequent ſenſual gratifications; and then they are importunately craved, and become neceſſary to fill the intervals of work. Of this ſort very few are able to afford ſo expenſive a recreation as the ſtage. And even as to the other, *viz.* thoſe whoſe ſpirits are exhauſted by application of mind, only a very ſmall number of them will chuſe the diverſion of the ſtage, for this very good reaſon, that ſocial converſe and bodily exerciſe, will anſwer the purpoſe much better. Indeed, if we conſider the juſt and legitimate end of recreations, and compare it with the perſons who moſt frequently engage in them, we ſhall find, that ninety-nine of every hundred are ſuch as do not need recreation at all. Perhaps their time lies heavy upon their hands, and they feel an uneaſineſs and impatience under their preſent ſtate; but this is not from work, but from idleneſs, and from the empti-

neſs and unſatisfying nature of the enjoyments, which they chaſe with ſo much eagerneſs, one after another, vainly ſeeking from them that good which they do not contain, and that ſatisfaction which they cannot impart.

From this I think it undeniably appears, that if no body were to attend the ſtage, but ſuch as really needed recreation or amuſement, upon Chriſtian principles, and of theſe ſuch only as were able to pay for it, and of theſe only ſuch as did themſelves chuſe it, there is not a place this day in the world ſo large as to afford a daily audience. It will be immediately objected, This argument, make as much of it as you pleaſe, is not complete, for it hinders not but that ſome, however few, may attend in a proper manner, and with warrantable views. But let it be remembered, that I attack not a play ſingly as a play, nor one perſon for being a witneſs to a thing of that nature, but the ſtage as a ſyſtem containing all the branches I have enumerated above. This cannot ſubſiſt without a full audience, and frequent attendance; and therefore is, by its conſtitution, a conſtant and powerful invitation to ſin, and cannot be maintained but by the commiſſion of it. Perhaps ſome will ſtill object, that this argument is too finely ſpun, that it ſeems to demand perfection, and to find fault with every practice, in which there is a probability that ſin will be committed. That, if this holds, we ſhould no more contribute to the eſtabliſhment of churches than play-houſes, becauſe we have a moral certainty, that no congregation ever will meet together on earth, but much ſin will be committed, both by

miniſter and people. But there is a great difference between a commanded duty which is attended with ſin by defect, and what is no where commanded, which neceſſarily invites to ſin by its nature, and is in ſubſtance ſinful to the great majority of thoſe who attend it.

But further, the ſtage is an improper, that is to ſay, an unlawful recreation to all without exception, becauſe it conſumes too much time. This is a circumſtance, which, however little impreſſion it may make upon thoſe who find their time often a burden, will appear of the greateſt moment to every ſerious Chriſtian. In proportion as any man improves in holineſs of heart, he increaſes in uſefulneſs of life, and acquires a deeper and ſtronger ſenſe of the worth and value of time. To ſpend an hour unprofitably, appears to ſuch a perſon a greater crime, than to many the commiſſion of groſs ſin. And, indeed, it ought to appear very heinous in the eyes of thoſe who believe the repreſentation given by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, of his own procedure at the day of judgment, "Caſt ye the UNPROFITABLE ſervant into utter darkneſs; there ſhall be weeping, and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth." Matt. xxv. 30. Mark this, ye lovers of pleaſure, ye ſons of gaiety and mirth, who imagine you are ſent into the world for no higher end than your own entertainment; and who, if you are free from, or able any how to palliate your groſſer ſins, never once reflect on the heavy account againſt you of waſted time!

Though there were no other objection againſt the ſtage as a recreation, but this one, it is ſurely

faulty. If recreations are only lawful becauſe neceſſary, they muſt ceaſe to be lawful when they are no longer neceſſary. The length and duration of regular comedy and tragedy is already fixed and ſettled by rules of long ſtanding; and I ſuppoſe, whatever other circumſtance may be confeſſed to need reformation, all men of taſte will agree, that theſe ſhall continue as they are. Now I leave to all who know how much time the preparation for ſuch a public appearance, and the neceſſary attendance, muſt take up, to judge, whether it is not too much to be given to mere recreation.

This holds particularly in the caſe of recreation of mind, between which and bodily exerciſe there is a very great difference. For bodily exerciſe in ſome caſes, for example, when the health requires it, may be continued for a long time, only for this reaſon, that it may have effects laſting in proportion to the time ſpent in it. But giving the mind to pleaſure by way of recreation muſt be ſhort, or it is certainly hurtful; it gives men a habit of idleneſs and trifling, and makes them averſe from returning to any thing that requires ſerious application. So true is this, and ſo applicable to the preſent caſe, that I could almoſt reſt the whole argument upon it, that no man, who has made the trial, can deliberately and with a good conſcience affirm, that attending plays has added ſtrength to his mind and warmth to his affections, in the duties of devotion; that it has made him more able and willing to exert his intellectual powers in the graver and more important offices of the Chriſtian life; nay, or even made him more diligent and active in the buſineſs of civil life. On the contrary, it is

commonly of ſuch length as to produce a ſatiety and wearineſs of itſelf, and to require reſt and refreſhment to recruit the exhauſted ſpirits, a thing quite abſurd and ſelf-contradictory in what is called a recreation.

But the ſtage is not merely an unprofitable conſumption of time, it is further improper as a recreation, becauſe it agitates the paſſions too violently, and intereſts too deeply, ſo as, in ſome caſes, to bring people into a real, while they behold an imaginary diſtreſs. Keeping in view the end of recreation, will enable us to judge rightly of this. It is to refreſh and invigorate the mind.—Therefore when, inſtead of reſt, which is properly called relaxation of mind, recreations are uſed, their excellence conſiſts in their being, not only a pleaſant, but an eaſy exerciſe of the intellectual powers. Whatever is difficult, and either requires or cauſes a ſtrong application of mind, is contrary to their intention. Now it is plain, that dramatic repreſentations fix the attention ſo very deeply, and intereſt the affections ſo very ſtrongly, that, in a little time, they fatigue the mind themſelves, and however eagerly they are deſired and followed, there are many ſerious and uſeful occupations, in which men will continue longer, without exhauſting the ſpirits, than in attending the theatre.

Indeed, in this reſpect they are wholly contrary to what ſhould be the view of every Chriſtian. He ought to ſet bounds to, and endeavour to moderate his paſſions as much as poſſible, inſtead of voluntarily and unneceſſarily exciting them. The human paſſions, ſince the fall, are all of them but too ſtrong;

and are not ſinful on account of their weakneſs, but their exceſs and miſapplication. This is ſo generally true, that it hardly admits of an exception; unleſs it might be counted an exception, that ſome vicious paſſions, when they gain an aſcendancy, extinguiſh others which oppoſe their gratification. For, though religion is conſiſtent throughout, there are many vices, which are mutually repugnant to and deſtructive of, each other. But this exception has little or no effect upon the preſent argument.

Now the great care of every Chriſtian, is to keep has paſſions and affections within due bounds, and to direct them to their proper objects. With reſpect to the firſt of theſe, the chief influence of theatrical repreſentations upon the ſpectator, is to ſtrengthen the paſſions by indulgence; for there they are all exhibited in a lively manner, and ſuch as is moſt fit to communicate the impreſſion. As to direct them to their proper objects, it will be afterwards ſhewn, that the ſtage has rather the contrary effect; in the mean time, it is ſufficient to obſerve, that it may be done much more effectually, and much more ſafely another way.

This tendency of plays to intereſt the affections, ſhews their impropriety as a recreation on another account. It ſhews that they muſt be exceeding liable to abuſe by exceſs, even ſuppoſing them in a certain degree to be innocent. It is certain there is no life more unworthy of a man, hardly any more criminal in a Chriſtian, than a life of perpetual amuſement, a life where no valuable purpoſe is purſued, but the intellectual faculties wholly employed in purchaſing and indulging ſenſual gratifica-

tions. It is alſo certain, that all of us are by nature too much inclined thus to live to ourſelves, and not to God. Therefore, where recreations are neceſſary, a watchful Chriſtian will particularly beware of thoſe that are inſnaring, and, by being too grateful and delicious, ready to lead to exceſs. This diſcriminating care and caution, is juſt as much the duty of a Chriſtian, as any that can be named. Though it is immediately converſant only about the temptations and incitements to ſin, and not the actual commiſſion of it, it becomes a duty directly binding, both from the command of God, and the neceſſity of the thing itſelf. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation," Mat. xxvi. 41. ſays our Saviour to all his diſciples; and elſewhere, "What I ſay unto you, I ſay unto all, Watch," Mark xiii. 37. And the apoſtle Paul to the ſame purpoſe, "See then that ye walk circumſpectly, not as fools, but as wiſe, redeeming the time, becauſe the days are evil," Eph. v. 15.

If we conſider the light in which the Scripture ſets our preſent ſituation, and the account there given of the weakneſs of human reſolution, the ſame thing will evidently appear to be our duty. It is impoſſible that we can reſiſt the ſlighteſt temptation, but by the aſſiſtance of divine grace.

Now how can this be expected, if we put our conſtancy to unneceſſary trials, not only contrary to reaſon, and a prudent regard to our own ſafety, but in the face of an expreſs command of God to be watchful. "Lord, lead us not into temptation," is a petition which we are taught to offer up, by him who knew what was in man. But how

much do thoſe act in oppoſition to this, and even in contempt of it, who make temptations to themſelves. And are not ſtage-plays temptations of the ſtrongeſt kind, in which the mind is ſoftened with pleaſure, and the affections powerfully excited? How little reaſon is there to hope that men in the uſe of them will keep within the bounds of moderation? If any expect, in ſuch circumſtances, to be preſerved by divine power, they are guilty of the ſin, which is in Scripture called "tempting God."

It is this very circumſtance, a liableneſs to abuſe by exceſs, that renders many other amuſements alſo ordinarily unlawful to Chriſtians, though, perhaps, in their general nature, they cannot be ſhewn to be criminal. Thus it is not eaſy to refute the reaſonings, by which ingenious men endeavour to ſhew that games of hazard are not in themſelves ſinful; but by their enticing, inſnaring nature, and the exceſs which almoſt inſeparably accompanies them, there can be no difficulty in pronouncing them highly dangerous, lawful to very few perſons, and in very few caſes. And if they were as public in their nature as plays, if they required the concurrence of as many operators, and as great a number of perſons to join in them, I could have little ſcruple in affirming, that in every poſſible caſe, they would be ſinful.

The preceding conſiderations are greatly confirmed by the following, That when plays are choſen as a recreation, for which they are ſo exceedingly improper, it is always in oppoſition to other methods of recreation, which are perfectly fit for the purpoſe, and not liable to any of theſe objections. Where

recreations are neceſſary, if there were only one ſort to be had, ſome inconveniencies could not be ſo ſtrong an argument againſt the uſe of them. But where there are different kinds, to prefer thoſe which are leſs, to thoſe which are more fit, muſt needs be ſinful. Such a tenderneſs and circumſpection is indeed, in this age, ſo rare and unuſual, that I am afraid, it will be almoſt impoſſible to fix a ſenſe of its importance upon the mind of the reader: or, if it be done, in any meaſure for a time, the example of a corrupt world, who are altogether void of it, will immediately efface the impreſſion. But, however few may "have ears to hear it," the thing is certain, that as the progreſs of his ſanctification is the ſupreme deſire and care of every Chriſtian, ſo he is continually liable to be ſeduced by temptation, and infected by example; and therefore, from a diſtruſt of his own reſolution, will not voluntarily and unneceſſarily prefer a dangerous to a ſafe amuſement. To prefer a very difficult and doubtful means of attaining any worldly end, to one ſure and eaſy; to prefer a clumſy improper inſtrument, to one perfectly fit for any piece of work, would be reckoned no ſmall evidence of folly in the affairs of civil life. If one in ſickneſs ſhould chuſe a medicine of a very queſtionable nature, of very dangerous and uncertain operation, when he had equal acceſs to one entirely ſafe, of approved reputation and ſuperior efficacy, it would be eſteemed next to madneſs. Is there not then a real conformity between the caſes? Is not a like care to be taken of our ſouls as of our bodies? Nay, is not the obligation ſo much the ſtronger, by how much the one is of great-

er value than the other? The different conduct of men, and their different fate in this reſpect, is well deſcribed by the wiſe man, "happy is the man that feareth always, but he that hardeneth his heart ſhall fall into miſchief," Prov. xxviii. 14.

It ought not to be omitted in ſhewing the impropriety of the ſtage as a recreation and amuſement for Chriſtians, that it is coſtly and expenſive, and that this coſt is altogether unneceſſary, ſince the end might be obtained, not only as well, but much better, at a far cheaper rate; perhaps, in moſt caſes, at no expence at all. I know this argument will be treated with great contempt by thoſe who live in affluence, and know no other uſe of riches but to feed their appetites, and make all the reſt of mankind ſubſervient to the gratification of their violent and ungovernable deſires. But though none in this world have any title to hinder them from diſpoſing of their wealth as they pleaſe, they muſt be called to conſider, that they have a maſter in heaven. To him they muſt render an account at the laſt day, and, in this account, the uſe that they make of their riches is not to be excepted. The great have, no doubt, the diſtinguiſhed honour, if they pleaſe to embrace it, of contributing to the happineſs of multitudes under them, and diſpenſing, under God, a great variety of the comforts of this life. But it would abate the envy and impatience of the lower part of the world, and moderate their appetite after riches, if they would conſider, that the more that is committed to them, the more they have to account for. The greateſt and richeſt man on earth hath not any licence in the word of God, for an un-

neceſſary waſte of his ſubſtance, or conſuming it in unprofitable and hurtful pleaſures; and under the one or both of theſe characters, that muſt fall, that is laid out upon the ſtage.

Let not any reader, who cannot find a ſatisfying anſwer to theſe objections againſt the ſtage as an unchriſtian amuſement, from the word of God, take the practice of the world as a refuge or ſanctuary, and ſay, This is carrying matters to an extreme; if theſe maxims are rigidly adhered to, you will exclude from the number of Chriſtians, not only the far greater part of mankind, but many otherwiſe of excellent and amiable characters. Though this is the weakeſt of all arguments, it is, perhaps, that which hath of all others the ſtrongeſt effect, and moſt powerfully contributes to ſet people's minds at eaſe in a doubtful or dangerous practice. How hard is it to make men ſenſible of the evil of ſuch ſins as cuſtom authoriſes and faſhion juſtifies! There is no making them aſhamed of them, becauſe they are common and reputable, and there is no making them afraid of what they ſee done without ſuſpicion by numbers on every hand. But is there any reaſon to believe, that the example of others will prove a juſt and valid excuſe for any practice at the judgment ſeat of Chriſt? Will the greatneſs or the number of offenders ſcreen them from his power? Or can that man expect a gracious acceptance with him, who has ſuffered his commands to be qualified by prevailing opinion, and would not follow him farther than the bulk of mankind would bear him company.

I ſhall cloſe the reflections upon this part of the ſubject by obſerving, that there are two general

characters of the disciples of Christ, which will appear, if we consult the scriptures, to be essential to them, and which seem altogether inconsistent with theatrical amusements. The first is self-denial and mortification. Though we should not insist upon the particular objections against the stage, there is something of pomp and gaiety in it, on the best possible supposition, that is inconsistent with the character of a Christian. The gospel is the religion of sinners who are saved from wrath by the rich mercy and free grace of God. The life of such then, must be a life of penitence, humility and mortification. The followers of a crucified Saviour must bear the cross, and tread in the same path of suffering and self-denial, in which he hath gone before them. In their baptismal covenant they renounce the world, by which is not meant such gross crimes as are a violation of natural light, as well as a transgression of the law of God, but that excessive attachment to present indulgence, which is more properly expressed by the pomp and vanity of the world *. It is true there are many precepts in

* It is not improper here to consider the ancient form of baptism, and what was supposed by the fathers to be implied in it, Apost. Const. lib. 7. cap. 41. *Apotassomai to satana*, &c. "I renounce Satan and his works, and his pomps, and his service, and his angels, and his inventions, and all things that belong to him, or are subject to him." Ambros. de Initiatis. Ingressus es regenerationis sacrarium, &c.—"Thou hast entered into the holy place of regeneration; repeat what you were there asked, and recollect what you answered. You renounced the devil, and his works, and his world, and his luxury and pleasures." Hieron. Com. in Matt. xv. 26. Renuntio tibi diabole, &c. "I renounce thee, Satan, and thy pomp, and thy vices,

Scripture, which require us to maintain an habitual gratitude and thankful frame of ſpirit, nay, to rejoice in the Lord alway. But there is a great difference between this joy, and that of worldly men; as they do not riſe from the ſame ſource, ſo they cannot poſſibly expreſs themſelves in the ſame way.

Another branch of the Chriſtian temper, between which and theatrical amuſements, there appears a very great oppoſition, is ſpirituality and heavenlineſs of mind. All real Chriſtians are, and account themſelves pilgrims and ſtrangers on the earth, ſet their affections on things above, and have their converſation in heaven. Whatever tends to weaken theſe diſpoſitions, they will carefully avoid, as contrary to their duty and their intereſt. Is not this the caſe with theatrical amuſements? Are they not

and thy world, which lieth in wickedness." And that we may know what they had particularly in view by the pomps of the world which they renounced, they are sometimes expressly said to be the public shows. Thus Salvian de Provident. lib. 6. page 197, Quæ est enim in baptismo, &c. "For what is the first profession of a Christian in baptism? What, but that they profess to renounce the devil, and his pomps, his shows, and his works. Therefore shows and pomps, by our own confession, are the works of the devil. How, O Christian, wilt thou follow the public shows after baptism, which thou confessest to be the works of the devil?"

There are some who pretend, that Christians were only kept from the shows, because they were mixed with idolatrous rites; but it is to be noted, that in the time of Salvian, idolatry was abolished, and the shows were no longer exhibited in honour of idol gods. Cyril of Jerusalem also, after idolatry was destroyed, continues the charge against the shows.

very delicious to a ſenſual and carnal mind? Do they not excite, gratify, and ſtrengthen theſe affections, which it is moſt the buſineſs of a Chriſtian to reſtrain? Are not the indulgence of worldly pleaſure, and heavenlineſs of mind, mutually deſtructive of each other? This is ſo plain, that anciently thoſe who gave themſelves up to a life of eminent holinſs and piety, uſed to retire wholly from the commerce of the world and the ſociety of men. Though this was wrong in itſelf, and ſoon found to be very liable to ſuperſtitious abuſe, it plainly ſhews how much they err upon the oppoſite ſide, who being called to wean their affections from the world, do yet voluntarily and unneceſſarily indulge htemſelves in the moſt delicious and intoxicating pleaſures.

What is offered above, I hope, will ſuffice to ſhew that the ſtage, conſidered ſimply as an entertainment, cannot be lawfully uſed by a Chriſtian. But we muſt now proceed in the ſecond place, to conſider the modern pretence, that it is uſeful and inſtructive; or, to ſpeak in the language of one of its defenders, "A warm incentive to virtue, and powerful preſervative againſt vice *." The ſame author gives us this account of tragedy: "True tragedy is a ſerious lecture upon our duty, ſhorter than an epic poem, and longer than a fable, otherwiſe differing from both only in the method, which is dialouge inſtead of narration; its province is to bring us in love with the more exalted virtues, and

* Remarks on Anderson's Positions concerning the unlawfulness of stage-plays.

to create a deteſtation of the blacker and (humanly ſpeaking) more enormous crimes." On comedy he ſays, "An inſinuating mirth laughs us out of our frailtes by making us aſhamed of them. Thus, when they are well intended, tragedy and comedy work to one purpoſe, the one manages us as children, the other convinces us as men."

In order to treat this part of the ſubject with preciſion, I muſt beg the reader to recal to mind the account formerly given of what is implied in the ſtage, even under the beſt poſſible regulation; becauſe, unleſs this be allowed me, I confeſs the argument to be defective. It is not denied, that there may be, and are to be found, in ſome dramatic performances, noble and excellent ſentiments. Theſe indeed are much fewer than is commonly ſuppoſed, as might be ſhewn by an examination of ſome of the moſt celebrated plays. There is a great difference between the ſhining thoughts that are applauded in the world by men of taſte, and the ſolid and profitable truths of religion. However, it is allowed, that there are ſome things to be found in plays, againſt which no juſt objection can be made; and it is eaſy to form an idea of them ſtill more pure than any that do yet exiſt; but the queſtion is, Whether it is poſſible now to find, or reaſonable to hope to find, ſuch a number of pieces, in their prevailing tendency, agreeable to the holineſs and purity of the Chriſtian character, as are neceſſary to ſupport a public theatre? Till this is accompliſhed, all that is done to ſupport the theatre in the mean time, is done to ſupport the intereſt of vice and wickedneſs; whatever it may be in itſelf, and

ſingly conſidered. And if ſuch an entire reformation be impoſſible, a partial reformation, or mixing a few good things with it, is not only ineffectual, but hurtful. It makes a bad cauſe a little more plauſible, and therefore the temptation ſo much the more formidable.

There is a diſcourſe of a foreigner of ſome note, in which he exerts all his eloquence in commendation of plays, when uſed in the public ſchools, for the improvement of youth in action and elocution, under the direction of their maſters. As this gentleman was a clergyman, his authority is often uſed on this ſubject. But it ought to be obſerved, that as he was a young man when he employed his eloquence in this cauſe, ſo, what he ſays, ſtrongly ſupports the propriety of the diſtinction I have laid down. He expreſsly confines the argument to ſuch plays as were preſented by youths in the ſchools, and rejects with great abhorrence the public ſtage, and ſuch as were acted by mercenary players. Of the laſt ſort he hath the following ſtrong words. "At hic "vereor A. ne qui ſint inter vos qui ex me quæ-"rant: Quid agis adoleſcens? Tune comœdos, "Hiſtriones, mimos, ex eloquentiæ ſtudioſis facere "paras? Egone? Hiſtriones? Quos? An viles illos "qui in ſcenam prodeunt mercede conducti? Qui "quæſtus cauſa quamlibet perſonam induant? Qui "paſſim per urbes vagantes artem ſuam venalem "habent? Qui, merito, Romano jure, infamia "notantur?——Abſit, a me abſit, ut in hac im-"pietatis ſchola teneros adoleſcentium animos elo-"quentia imbui velim. Quanticunque eam facio, "tanti tamen non eſt. Satius eſſet balbutire, imo

" ſatius mutum eſſe, quam non ſine ſummo animi,
" periculo eloquentiam diſcere *." Which paſſage may be tranſlated thus; " But here I am afraid ſome
" of you will he ready to challenge me, and to ſay,
" what is this you aim at, young man? Do you
" intend to make all who ſtudy eloquence com-
" edians, players, buffoons? Do I indeed? What
" ſort of players? Thoſe contemptible wretches,
" who are hired to come upon the ſtage, and who
" for gain will perſonate any character whatever?
" Who go about through different cities making
" merchandize of their art? Who are juſtly mark-
" ed with infamy in the Roman law?——Far, far
" be it from me to propoſe, that the tender minds
" of youth ſhould be taught eloquence in this
" ſchool of impiety. However much I value it, I
" value it not at this rate. Better it were they
" ſhould ſtammer in ſpeech, nay, better that they
" were dumb and incapable of ſpeech, than that
" they ſhould learn the art of eloquence, by putting
" their ſouls in the moſt imminent danger." Now, whether this author's ſcheme was right or not, I have no occaſion at preſent to debate with him as an adverſary, for he rejects with abhorrence the imputation of favouring the cauſe againſt which I plead.

When a public theatre is defended as a means of inſtruction, I cannot help thinking it is of importance to obſerve, that it is a method altogether uncommanded and unauthorized in the word of God. This will probably appear a very weak argument to many, but it will not appear ſo to thoſe who have a

* Werenfels Oratio de Comœdiis.

firm belief of, and a juſt eſteem for that book of life. Such will not expect, that any method will prove effectual to make men "wiſe unto ſalvation," without the bleſſing of God, and they will hardly be induced to look for this bleſſing upon the ſtage. And let it be remembered, that it is now pleaded for in a higher light, and on a more important account, than merely as an amuſement, *viz.* as proper to ſupport the intereſt of religion; it ſhould therefore have a poſitive warrant before it be employed in this cauſe, leſt it ſhould meet with the ſame reception that all other human devices will meet with, "Who hath required theſe things at your hands?"

And that none may uſe a deluſory ſort of reaſoning, and ſhift from one pretence to another, ſaying, it becomes a lawful amuſement by its tendency to inſtruct, and an effectual inſtruction by its power to pleaſe at the ſame time; it muſt be obſerved, that a ſinful amuſement is not to be indulged on any pretence whatſoever; for we muſt not "do evil, that good may come." Nay, call it only a dangerous amuſement, even in that caſe, no pretence of poſſible or probable inſtruction (though ſuch a thing were not contrary to the ſuppoſition) is ſufficient to warrant it. Nothing leſs than its being neceſſary, could authoriſe the practice, and that I hope none will be ſo hardy as to affirm.

It can never be affirmed to be neceſſary, without a blaſphemous impeachment of the divine wiſdom. If the holy ſcriptures, and the methods there authoriſed and appointed, are full and ſufficient for our ſpiritual improvement, all others muſt be wholly

unneceſſary. And if they are the moſt powerful and the moſt effectual means, no others muſt be ſuffered to come into rivalſhip and competition with them; on the contrary, they muſt be condemned as wrong, or laid aſide as comparatively weak. The truth is, the ſtage can never be defended on a more untenable footing, than when it is repreſented as having a moral or virtuous, that is to ſay, a pious or religious tendency. What Chriſtian can hear ſuch a plea with patience? Is the "law of the Lord perfect, converting the ſoul? Is it able to make the man of God perfect thoroughly furniſhed to every good work?" What then are its defects which muſt be ſupplied by the theatre? Have the ſaints of God, for ſo many ages, been carried ſafely through all the dark and difficult ſteps of their earthly pilgrimage, with his law as a "light to their feet, and a lamp to their path," and yet is it now neceſſary, that they ſhould have additional illumination from a well regulated ſtage? Have there been for ſo long a time paſtors employed, bearing a divine commiſſion? ordinances adminiſtered according to divine inſtitution? Have theſe been hitherto effectual for "perfecting the ſaints, for the work of the miniſtry, and for edifying the body of Chriſt?" And ſhall we not count them among the ſcoffers that were to come in the laſt days, who pretend to open a new commiſſion for the players to aſſiſt? If any ſhall ſay, there needs no divine inſtitution, all men are called to inſtruct one another, "the lips of the righteous ſhould feed many," and this way of the drama is but a mode of the inſtruction we all owe to one another? I

anſwer, it is as a mode I attack it. This very mode has been ſhewn to be dangerous, nay ſinful, as an amuſement; who then can ſhew its neceſſity, in the ſame mode, for inſtruction or improvement?

If the ſtage be a proper method of promoting the intereſts of religion, then is Satan's kingdom divided againſt itſelf, which he is more cunning than to ſuffer it to be. For whatever debate there be, whether good men MAY attend the theatre, there can be no queſtion at all, that no openly vicious man, is an enemy to it, and that far the greateſt part of them do paſſionately love it. I ſay no OPENLY vicious man; for doubtleſs there may be ſome hypocrites wearing the habit of the Chriſtian pilgrim, who are the very worſt of men, and yet may ſhew abundance of zeal againſt the ſtage. But nothing is more certain than that taking the world according to its appearance, it is the worſt part of it that ſhews moſt paſſion for this entertainment, and the beſt that avoids and fears it, than which there can hardly be a worſe ſign of it, as a means of doing good. Whoever believes the following words of our bleſſed Redeemer, will never be perſuaded that poets and actors for the ſtage have received any commiſſion to ſpeak in his name. "My ſheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, John x. 27.—A ſtranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of ſtrangers," John x. 5.*

* It is to be obſerved here, to prevent mistakes, that the argument is founded on the general and prevailing inclination of the greatest part of each character, and not upon particular instances, in many of which it is confeſ-

This leads us to obſerve, that the ſtage is not only an improper method of inſtruction, but that all, or the far greateſt number of pieces there repreſented, muſt have, upon the whole, a pernicious tendency. This is evident, becauſe they muſt be to the taſte and reliſh of the bulk of thoſe who attend it. The difficulty of getting good authors for the theatre, I ſhall not inſiſt upon, but whatever the authors are able or willing to do, it is certain, that their productions in fact can riſe no higher in point of purity, than the audience ſhall be willing to receive. Their attendance is not conſtrained, but voluntary; nay they pay dearly for their entertainment: and therefore they muſt, and will have it to their taſte. This is a part of the ſubject that merits the particular attention of all who are inclined to judge impartially, and it proves in the ſtrongeſt manner, the abſurdity of forming

sed, it will not hold. For, as it is difficult to know the real character of some persons, in whom there are some marks and signs of true religion, and at the same time, some symptoms of unsoundness, so it is still more difficult to determine the quality of single actions. Therefore, it is little or no argument that any practice is safe or good, because one good man, or one supposed to be good, has been known to do it; on the contrary, ill, because one bad man has been known to do it. But as, when we retire further from the limit that divides them, the characters are more clearly and sensibly distinguished, so, whatever practice is passionately desired by wicked men in general, and shunned by the good, certainly is of bad tendency. If it were otherwise, as said above, "Satan's kingdom would be divided against itself," and the God "who keepeth covenant and truth for ever," would fail in his promise, of "giving" his people "counsel," and "teaching them the way in which they ought to walk."

chimerical ſuppoſitions of a ſtage ſo regulated, as, inſtead of being hurtful, to promote the intereſt of piety and virtue.

Here let ſome truths be called to mind which are frequently mentioned in the holy Scriptures, but ſeldom recollected, and their conſequences very little attended to. There is a diſtinction often ſtated, both in the old and new Teſtament, between the children of God and the men of the world. Theſe are mixed together in the preſent ſtate, and cannot, in many caſes, be certainly diſtinguiſhed by their outward appearance; yet is there at bottom not only a real diſtinction of character, but a perfect oppoſition between them, as to the commanding principle of all their actions. And as there is an oppoſition of character between them, ſo there muſt be an oppoſition of intereſts and views. Our bleſſed Redeemer, when he came into the world, was "deſpiſed and rejected of men:" and he every where tells his diſciples, that they muſt expect no better treatment. Matt. v. 11, 12. "Bleſſed are ye when men ſhall revile you, and perſecute you, and ſhall ſay all manner of evil againſt you falſely, for my ſake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for ſo perſecuted they the prophets that were before you." And on the other hand, Luke vi. 26. "Wo unto you when all men ſhall ſpeak well of you, for ſo did their fathers to the falſe prophets." Again, John xv. 19. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but becauſe ye are not of the world, but I have choſen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." His apoſtles ſpeak always

in the ſame language: thus the apoſtle Paul, Rom. xii. 2. "And be not conformed to this world." Nay, he lays it down as an univerſal poſition, 2 Tim. iii. 12. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus ſhall ſuffer perſecution." Now I aſk, Whether thoſe who have a ſtrong and rooted averſion to true holineſs, which is not the character of the ſincere Chriſtian, will voluntarily crowd to the theatre, to hear and ſee ſuch performances as breathe nothing but what is agreeable to the pure and uncorrupted word of God? Will thoſe who revile, injure, and perſecute the ſaints themſelves, delight in the ſtage, if honour is there put upon true religion, and be pleaſed with that character in the repreſentation which they hate in the original? This would be to expect impoſſibilities. And therefore, while the great majority of thoſe who attend the ſtage are unholy, it is certain, that the plays which they behold with pleaſure, cannot, upon the whole, but have a criminal tendency.

If any alledge, that the poet's art may be a means to make religion amiable to them, I anſwer, that he cannot make it amiable, but by adulteration, by mixing it with ſomething agreeable to their own taſte; and then it is not religion that they admire, but the erroneous, debaſed, and falſe reſemblance of it. Or even ſuppoſing, that, in a ſingle inſtance or two, nothing in ſubſtance ſhould be ſet before them but true religion, and this dreſſed to the very higheſt advantage by the poet's genius and actor's ſkill, there would be little gained: becauſe theſe human arts only would be the object of their admiration, and they would always prefer, and ſpeedi-

ly procure, a diſplay of the ſame arts, upon a ſubject more agreeable to their corrupt minds. This indeed, we are not left to gather by way of inference and deduction from other truths, but are expreſsly taught it in the word of God. For "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are fooliſhneſs unto him, neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. Experience is a ſtrong proof of this. For if any man will take the pains of making up a ſyſtem of the morality of the ſtage, I do not mean the horrid profanity, and ſcandalous obſcenity, that is to be found in the worſt, but of that which is called virtue in the beſt of the pieces wrote for the theatre, he will find it exceeding different from Chriſtian morals; and, that an adherence to it would be, in moſt inſtances, a wilful departure from the rules of a holy life.

However plainly this is founded upon the word of God, and ſound reaſon, there are ſome very unwilling to think, that ever their duty as Chriſtians ſhould conſtrain them to be at odds with the delicacies of life, or the polite and faſhionable pleaſures of the age. And, as the mind of man is very ingenious in the defence of that pollution which it loves, they ſometimes bring in criticiſm to their aid. They alledge, that by the "world" is underſtood, generally through the New Teſtament, thoſe who were heathens by profeſſion; and that the ſame oppoſition to true religion, in judgment and heart, is not to be aſcribed to thoſe who are members of the viſible church. It is anſwered, the word did indeed ſignify as they ſay, for this plain reaſon, that in the early

days of Chriſtianity, when it was under perſecution, few or none would make profeſſion of it, unleſs they did really believe it. But is not the meaning ſtill the ſame? Can we ſuppoſe that the hatred of the then world, was at the name of religion only, and not at the ſubſtance? Was the devil "the prince of this world" then? and has he not now equal dominion over, and is he not equally ſerved by thoſe who are profane in their lives, though they were once baptiſed? Was he the ſpirit that "then worked," and is he not the ſpirit that "now works," in the children of diſobedience? The truth therefore remains ſtill the ſame; thoſe who are in a natural and unregenerate ſtate, who hate true religion in their hearts, muſt have ſomething very different before they can be pleaſed with ſeeing it on the ſtage. *

* There is an excellent passage to this purpose in an essay against plays, to be found in one of the volumes published about a hundred years ago, by the gentlemen of the Port-Royal in France, a society of Jansenists, of great parts and eminent piety. This essay in particular, is by some said to be written by the prince of Conti. Section 15th of that essay, he says, "It is so true that plays are almost always a representation of vicious passions, that the most part of Christian virtues are incapable of appearing upon the stage. Silence, patience, moderation, wisdom, poverty, repentance, are no virtues, the representation of which can divert the spectators; and above all, we never hear humility spoken of, and the bearing of injuries. It would be strange to see a modest and silent religious person represented. There must be something great and renowned according to men, or at least something lively and animated, which is not met withal in Christian gravity and wisdom; and therefore those who have been desirous to introduce holy men and women upon the stage, have

That this argument may have its proper force, we ought to conſider, how great a proportion of perſons under the dominion of vice and wickedneſs there muſt always be among thoſe who attend the theatre. The far greateſt number of the world in general are ungodly. This is a fact which could hardly be denied, even though the following paſſage had not ſtood in the oracles of truth. "Enter ye in at the ſtrait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to deſtruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Becauſe ſtrait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Matt. vii. 13, 14. And as none can attend the ſtage, but thoſe in higher life, and more affluent circumſtances than the bulk of mankind, there is ſtill a greater proportion of them who are enemies to pure and undefiled religion. Thus, ſays our Saviour to his diſciples, "Verily I ſay unto you, that a rich man ſhall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I ſay unto you, it is eaſier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Matt. xix. 23, 24. To the ſame purpoſe the apoſtle Paul ſays, "Ye ſee your calling brethren, how that not many wiſe men after the fleſh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." 1 Cor. i. 26. This does not at all ſuppoſe that thoſe in high life are originally more corrupt in their nature than others, but it ariſes from their

been forced to make them appear proud, and to make them utter diſcourſes more proper for the ancient Roman heroes, than for ſaints and martyrs. Their devotion upon the ſtage ought to be always a little extraordinary."

being expoſed to much greater and ſtronger temptations. Now, if from the ſmall number of real Chriſtians in the upper ranks of life, we again ſubtract ſuch as count the ſtage unlawful or dangerous, or have no inclination to it, there will very few remain of thoſe who are "the ſalt of the earth," to ſeaſon the unhallowed aſſembly. What ſort of productions then muſt they be, which ſhall have the approbation of ſuch judges? How much more fitted to pollute than to reform, to poiſon than to cure? If ſuch in fact the great bulk of plays have always hitherto been, from what has been ſaid, it ought not to be wondered at, becauſe it cannot be otherwiſe.

It is very poſſible, that ſome may be all this while holding the argument very cheap, and ſaying with lord Shafteſbury, "The true genius is of a nobler nature than ſervilely to ſubmit to the corrupt or vitiated taſte of any age or place;—he works not for gain, but deſpiſes it;—he knows, and will not ſwerve from the truth of art; he will produce what is noble and excellent in its kind;—he will refine the public ear, and teach them to admire in the right place." Theſe, though I do not cite any particular paſſage, are all of them ſentiments, and moſt of them expreſſions, of that author ſo much admired among modern philoſophers.—But the objection is eaſily ſolved. The obſervation is allowed to be juſt, and to hold with reſpect to the poetic, oratorial, or any human art, becauſe we know of no higher ſtandard in any of theſe, than what human nature in its preſent ſtate, will moſt admire, when it is exhibited to view. Accordingly, the great poet and the great orator, though, through the prevalence

of a bad taſte, they may find it difficult at firſt to procure attention, yet they will procure it at laſt; and when they are heard, they carry the prize from all inferior pretenders: and indeed, their doing ſo is the very touchſtone and trial of their art itſelf. In this caſe there lies no appeal from the judgment of the public or the multitude (as David Hume has ſaid for once according to truth) to the judgment of a wiſer few.

But there cannot be any thing more abſurd than to ſuppoſe, that the ſame thing will hold in morals and religion. The dramatic poets in Athens, where the ſtage was firſt eſtabliſhed, improved upon one another, and refined their own taſte, and that of their audience, as to the elegance of their compoſitions. Nay, they ſoon brought tragedy, as a great critic * obſerves, to as great perfection as the nature of the thing ſeems to admit of. But whoever will from this infer, that they improved in their morals in the ſame proportion, or by that means, will fall into a very groſs miſtake. This indeed ſeems to be the great error of modern infidels, to ſuppoſe that there is no more in morals than a certain taſte and ſenſe of beauty and elegance. Natural talents in the human mind are quite diſtinct from moral diſpoſitions, and the excellence of the one is no evidence at all of the prevalence of the other. On the contrary, the firſt are many times found in the higheſt perfection, where there is a total abſence of the laſt. And therefore, that true genius is the object of univerſal approbation, hinders not but that true good-

* Ariſtotle.

neſs is the object of general averſion. The Scripture aſſures us, that all men are by nature under the power of ſin, "that every imagination of the thoughts of man is only evil from his youth, and that continually," Gen. vi. 5. "That the carnal mind is enmity againſt God, and," till it be renewed by divine grace, "is not ſubject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. viii. 7.

Now it is utterly impoſſible and ſelf-contradictory, that men ſhould approve and delight in that which is contrary to the habitual prevailing temper of their hearts; and to bring about a change in them is not in the power of any human art, but with the concurrence of the Spirit and grace of God. In this he has given no authority to the players to act under him, nay, he has expreſsly told us, that he will not ordinarly, in any way whatever, make uſe of the perfection of human art, but of the plaineſt and weakeſt outward means. Thus the apoſtle Paul tells us his Maſter ſent him "to preach the goſpel, not with wiſdom of words, leſt the croſs of Chriſt ſhould be made of none effect." 1 Cor. i. 17. And, "after that in the wiſdom of God, the world by wiſdom knew not God, it pleaſed God by the fooliſhneſs of preaching to ſave them that believe." 1 Cor. i. 21. He alſo profeſſes that his practice had always been conformed to this rule. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of ſpeech or of wiſdom, declaring unto you the teſtimony of God." 1 Cor. ii. 1. "And my ſpeech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wiſdom, but in demonſtration of the

Spirit and of power. That your faith ſhould not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God *." 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5.

It may be neceſſary here to obviate an objection, that in the holy Scriptures themſelves we find ſeveral paſſages which ſeem to ſignify that true religion, though it is not the choice of all men, is yet the object of univerſal approbation. Thus we are told, that "the righteous ſhall be in everlaſting remembrance, but the memory of the wicked ſhall rot." Nay, we are exhorted by the apoſtle Paul to the practice of our duty in ſuch terms as theſe, "What-

* Perhaps ſome will aſk here, Is then human art, and are natural talents, which are the gifts of God, wholly excluded from his ſervice? I anſwer they are not. And yet the inſtances of their being eminently uſeful are exceeding rare. Such is the imperfection of the human mind that it can hardly at the ſame time, give great attention and application to two diſtinct ſubjects; and therefore, when men give that intenſe application to human art, which it is neceſſary to bring it to its perfection, they are apt to overlook the power and grace of God, without which all art is vain and ineffectual. Agreeably to this, when men of eminent talents have been of ſervice in religion, it has been commonly by the exercise of ſelf-denial, by making a very ſparing and moderate uſe of them, and ſhewing themſelves ſo deeply penetrated with a ſenſe of the important truths of the everlaſting goſpel, as to deſpiſe the beauties and embelliſhments of human ſkill, too great an attention to which is evidently inconſiſtent with the other. Well, ſay refined obſervers, this is the very perfection of art to uſe it with great reſerve, and to keep it out of view as much as poſſible. And it is indeed the perfection of art to have the appearance of this, but it is peculiar to a renewed heart to have it in reality.

ſoever things are true, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things." But theſe muſt ſurely be explained in ſuch a manner, as to be conſiſtent with the clear and ſtrong paſſages mentioned above; which it is not difficult to do. The matter of many good actions, particularly ſocial virtues, the duties of the ſecond table of the law, wicked men do often approve, nay, they may not only ſee ſome beauty, but feel ſome pleaſure in them, from natural, though unſanctified affections leading to them. But truly good actions, inſtances of holy obedience to God, in their manner, and in the principles from which they ought to flow, they neither can approve nor perform.

Nothing can be done agreeable to the will of God, but what hath the following properties. It muſt be done from a ſenſe, not only of the unalterable obligation, but the perfect excellence of the law of God, Rom. vii. 12. renouncing all pretence of merit in the actor, Gal ii. 20. Phil. iii. 8.; depending for aſſiſtance entirely on divine ſtrength, John xv. 5.; and with a ſingle eye to the divine glory, 1 Cor. x. 31. 1 Pet. iv. 11. It is not the matter of an action that renders it truly holy, but the prevalence of theſe principles in the heart of the performer. And they are ſo far from being generally approved, that they are hated and deſpiſed, and the very profeſſion of moſt of them at leaſt, ridiculed by every worldly man. The truth is, it is not eaſy to diſcover theſe principles otherwiſe than by narration. They lie deep in the heart, they do not ſeek to diſcover themſelves, and the ſhewing

them on the ſtage would be a ſort of contradiction to their nature. I believe it would exceed the art of moſt poets or actors, to exhibit by outward ſigns, true ſelf-denial, without joining to it ſuch oſtentation, as would deſtroy its effect. Or if it could be done, it would be ſo far from being delightful to thoſe who "through the pride of their heart will not ſeek after God," that it would fill them with diſguſt or diſdain. So that all friends of the ſtage ought to join with David Hume, who hath excluded ſelf-denial, humility, and mortification, from the number of the virtues, and ranked them among the vices.

From this it appears, that worldly men will bear a form of godlineſs, but the ſpirit and power of it they cannot endure. When therefore, the Scriptures repreſent religion, or any part of it, as amiable in the eyes of mankind in general, it is only giving one view of its excellence in itſelf or in its matter; but this can never be intended to make the judgment of bad men its ſtandard or meaſure. And when the approbation of men is propoſed as an argument to duty, it cannot be conſidered in any other light, than as an aſſiſtant ſubordinate motive to preſerve us from its violation: for the Scriptures will never warrant us to aim at the praiſe of men, as the reward of our compliance.

If there be any more than what is ſaid above in the teſtimony which wicked men give in favour of religion, it is but the voice of natural conſcience, that is, the voice of God in them, and not their own; and as it is extorted from them againſt their will, they do all in their power to deſtroy the force

of the evidence. This we may be ſenſible of, if we will recollect, that it is always general, and that many ſpeak well of ſomething which they call religion in general, when yet there is hardly any of the ſervants of God, in whoſe character and conduct they will not endeavour either to find or make a flaw. The truth is, though ſome few heroes in profanity vilify religion in itſelf directly, and in all its parts, the plurality of ſcoffers only tell you this and the other thing is not religion, but ſuperſtition, preciſeneſs, fancy or whim, and ſo on. But at the ſame time, if you take away all that by ſome or other is reflected on under theſe appellations, you will leave little behind. Which plainly teaches us this truth, that no man will cordially approve of ſuch a ſcheme of religion as he does not believe and embrace, or inwardly and without diſſimulation applaud a character that is better than his own: at leaſt, than his own either is, or he falſely preſumes it to be *. For this reaſon the apoſtle John

* For aſcertaining the ſenſe, and confirming the truth of this paſſage, it is proper to obſerve, That by the word *better* is not ſo much to be underſtood higher in degree, as different in kind. Though even in the firſt ſenſe it ſeems to hold pretty generally in comparisons between man and man. Men commonly extend their charity to thoſe who have leſs, and not to thoſe who have more goodneſs than themſelves. They are very few, who, when they ſee others more ſtrict and regular in their conduct than they are willing to be, do not aſcribe it either to wickedneſs or hypocriſy. Perhaps, indeed, the reaſon of this may be, that a gradual difference as to the actions done, is conſidered as conſtituting a ſpecific difference in the moral character; and men condemn others not for

gives it as a mark or evidence of regeneration, "We know that we have paſſed from death to life, becauſe we love the brethren;" that is to ſay, a ſincere and prevalent love to a ſaint as ſuch, can dwell in no heart but that which is ſanctified.

It will be proper here to take notice, becauſe it has ſome relation to this ſubject of what the advocates of the ſtage often make their boaſt, that before a poliſhed audience things groſsly criminal are not ſuffered to be acted; and that it is one of the rules of the drama, that if ſuch things be ſuppoſed they muſt be kept behind the ſcenes. We are often put in mind of the pure taſte of an Athenian audience, who, upon one of the actors expreſſing a profane thought, all roſe up and left the theatre. A famous French tragedian, Corneille, alſo takes notice of it as an evidence of the improvement of the ſtage in his time, that one of his beſt written pieces

being better than themſelves, upon their own notion of goodness, but for placing religion in the extremes, which they apprehend ought to be avoided. This confirms the remark made above, that every man's own character is the standard of his approbation, and ſhews at the ſame time its inconſiſtency with that humility which is eſſential to every Chriſtian. Wherever there is a real approbation, and ſincere confeſſion of ſuperior worth, there is alſo an unfeigned imitation of it. The Chriſtian not only knows himſelf to be infinitely diſtant from God, whom yet he ſupremely loves, but thinks himſelf leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints: but he could neither love the one nor the other, if he had not a real, however diſtant likeneſs; if he had not the ſeeds of every good diſpoſition implanted in him, the growth of which is his ſupreme deſire, and the improvement of which is the conſtant object of his care and diligence.

had not ſucceeded, "Becauſe it ſtruck the ſpectators with the horrid idea of a proſtitution to which a holy woman had been condemned." As to the caſe of the Athenians, it were eaſy to ſhew from the nature and circumſtances of the fact, that this reſentment at the profanity of the poet, though it was expreſſed in the theatre, was by no means learned there. But it is needleſs to enter into any nice diſquiſition upon this ſubject, for all that follows from any ſuch inſtances, is, that there are ſome things ſo very groſs and ſhocking, that, as but a few of the moſt abandoned will commit them, ſo the reſt of the world can have no delight in beholding them. There is, no doubt, a great variety of characters differing one from another in the degree of their degeneracy, and yet all of them eſſentially diſtinct from true piety.

To ſet this matter in a juſt light, we muſt remember, that, as has been confeſſed above, the matter of many good actions, or a defective imperfect form of virtue, is approved by the generality of the world; and, that they are very much ſwayed in their actions by a view to public praiſe. Therefore, they are mutually checks to one another, and vice is not ſeen on a theatre in a groſs, but commonly in a more dangerous, becauſe an engaging and inſinuating form. The preſence of ſo many witneſſes does reſtrain and diſguiſe ſin, but cannot change its nature, or render it innocent. The purity of the theatre can never be carried farther by the taſte of the audience, than what is required in converſation with the polite and faſhionable world. There vice is in ſome meaſure reſtrained; men may

be wicked, but they muſt not be rude. How much this amounts to is but too well known; it is no more than that we muſt not diſguſt thoſe with whom we converſe, and varies with their character. This is ſo far from being agreeable to the rules of the goſpel, that a ſerious Chriſtian is often obliged, from a ſenſe of duty, to be guilty of a breach of good manners, by adminiſtring unacceptable reproof.

Thus it appears, that, in the ſtage, the audience gives law to the poet, which is much the ſame thing as the ſcholar chuſing his own leſſon; and whether this be a ſafe or profitable method of inſtruction, is eaſy to judge. Every one who knows human nature, eſpecially who believes the repreſentation given of it in ſcripture, muſt conclude, that the young will be ſeduced into the commiſſion, and the older confirmed and hardened in the practice of ſin; becauſe characters, fundamentally wrong, will be there painted out in an amiable light, and diveſted of what is moſt ſhameful and ſhocking. By this means conſcience, inſtead of being alarmed, and giving faithful teſtimony, is deceived and made a party in the cauſe. In ſhort, vice in the theatre muſt wear the garb, aſſume the name, and claim the reward of virtue.

How ſtrong a confirmation of this have we from experience! Have not plays in fact commonly turned upon the characters moſt grateful, and the events moſt intereſting to corrupt nature? Pride, under the name of greatneſs of mind, ambition, and revenge, under thoſe of valour and heroiſm, have been their conſtant ſubjects. But chiefly love: this, which

is the ſtrongeſt paſſion, and the moſt dangerous in the human frame, and from which the greateſt number of crimes the moſt atrocious, have ſprung, was always encouraged upon the ſtage. There women are ſwelled with vanity, by ſeeing their ſex deified and adored; there men learn the language, as well as feel by ſympathy, the tranſports of paſſion; and there the hearts of both are open and unguarded to receive the impreſſion, becauſe it is covered with a maſk of honour. Hath this then been only the caſe at particular times of occaſional corruption, or for want of a proper regulation of the ſtage? No, it is inſeparable from its conſtitution. Such hath been the nature and tendency of plays in all former ages, and ſuch, from the taſte and diſpoſition of thoſe who attend them, it is certain they will for ever continue to be *.

* Perhaps it will be alledged, that the whole force of this reasoning may be evaded, by supposing a stage directed by the magistrate, and supported at the public charge. In this case the performers would be under no temptation, for gain, to gratify the taste of the audience, and the managers would have quite a different intention. It is confessed, that this supposition seems considerably to weaken the arguments above used, though perhaps more in theory than it would do in practice. But I would ask any who make such a supposition, why this inviolable attachment to the stage? Why must so many efforts be made to preserve it in some shape or other? What are its mighty benefits, that it must be forced as it were, out of its own natural course in order to make it lawful, rather than we will give it up as pernicious?—It is also to be observed that, however useful an ordinance of God magistracy be for public order, there is very little security in the direction of magistrates, for sound and wholesome instruction in religion or morals. We can never depend upon them for

Another argument, which ſhews the ſtage to be an improper method of inſtruction, or rather that it is pernicious and hurtful, may be drawn from its own nature. In its moſt improved ſtate, it is a picture of human life, and muſt repreſent charac-

this, unless they are themselves persons of true piety, and not always even when that is the case, because they may be guilty of many errors in judgment. Now it is not reasonable to hope, that magistrates in any country, will be always, or even generally, persons of true piety. Such, with the other qualifications necessary to magistrates, are not always to be found. Neither is there any necessity for it; because though doubtless, those who fear God will be the most faithful magistrates, and the most dutiful subjects, yet the greatest part of the duties of both may be performed without this, in a manner in which the public will see and feel very little difference. Magistracy has only the outward carriage, and not the heart for its object; and it is the sensible effect which the public looks for, and not the principle from which any thing is done. Therefore, as on the one hand, if a subject obeys the laws, and outwardly fulfils the duties of his station, the magistrate hath nothing farther to demand, though it be only for "wrath," and not "for conscience sake;" so on the other, if a magistrate be diligent in preserving order, and promoting the general good, though the motive of his actions be no better than vanity, ambition, or the fear of man well concealed, the public reaps the benefit, and has no ground of complaint, even whilst his character is detestable in the sight of God. But this magistrate can never be safely intrusted with the direction of what regards our moral and spiritual improvement, and he would be going out of his own sphere should he attempt it.——After all, it makes little difference whether the magistrate or any body else directs the stage, while the attendance is voluntary; for in that case, it must either be suited to the taste of the audience, or it will be wholly deserted.

ters as they really are. An author for the ſtage is not permitted to feign, but to paint and copy. Though he ſhould introduce things or perſons ever ſo excellent, if there were not diſcerned a reſemblance between them and real life, they would be ſo far from being applauded, that they would not be ſuffered, but would be condemned, as a tranſgreſſion of the fundamental rules of the art. Now, are not the great majority of characters in real life bad? Muſt not the greateſt part of thoſe repreſented on the ſtage be bad? And therefore muſt not the ſtrong impreſſion which they make upon the ſpectators be hurtful in the ſame proportion?

It is a known truth, eſtabliſhed by the experience of all ages, that bad example has a powerful and unhappy influence upon human characters. Sin is of a contagious and ſpreading nature, and the human heart is but too ſuſceptible of the infection. This may be aſcribed to ſeveral cauſes, and to one in particular which is applicable to the preſent caſe, that the ſeeing of ſin frequently committed, muſt gradually abate that horror which we ought to have of it upon our minds, and which ſerves to keep us from yielding to its ſolicitations. Frequently ſeeing the moſt terrible objects renders them familiar to our view, and makes us behold them with leſs emotion. And from ſeeing ſin without reluctance, the tranſition is eaſy, to a compliance with its repeated importunity, eſpecially as there are latent remaining diſpoſitions to ſinning in every heart that is but imperfectly ſanctified. It will be difficult to aſſign any other reaſon, why wickedneſs is always carried to a far greater height in large and populous

cities, than in the country. Do not multitudes, in places of great reſort, come to perpetrate, calmly and ſedately, without any remorſe, ſuch crimes as would ſurpriſe a leſs knowing ſinner ſo much as to hear of? Can it then be ſafe, to be preſent at the exhibition of ſo many vicious characters as always muſt appear upon the ſtage? Muſt it not, like other examples, have a ſtrong, though inſenſible influence, and indeed the more ſtrong, becauſe unperceived?

Perhaps ſome will ſay, This argument draws very deep, it is a reproaching of Providence, and finding fault with the order which God hath appointed, at leaſt permitted, to take place in the world, where the very ſame proportion of wicked characters is to be ſeen. But is there not a wide difference between the permiſſion of any thing by a wiſe, holy, and juſt God, or its making part of the plan of Providence, and our preſuming to do the ſame thing, without authority, and when we can neither reſtrain it within proper bounds, nor direct it to its proper end? There are many things which are proper and competent to God, which it would be the moſt atrocious wickedneſs in man to imitate. Becauſe it is both good and juſt in God to viſit us with ſickneſs, or to take us away by death when he ſees it proper, would it therefore be lawful in us, to bring any of them upon ourſelves at our own pleaſure? I ſhould rather be inclined to think, that theſe ſportive repreſentations on the ſtage, inſtead of being warranted by their counterpart in the world, are a daring profanation, and as it were a mockery of divine Providence, and ſo to be conſidered in a light yet more dreadful, than

any in which they have been hitherto viewed. Beſides, it ought to be remembered that, though evil actions, as permitted, make a part of the will of God, yet hitherto, all who deſerve the name of Chriſtians have affirmed, that what is ſinful in any action is to be aſcribed to the will of the creature as its adequate cauſe; and therefore, exhibiting human actions and characters upon the ſtage, is not only repreſenting the works of God, but repeating the ſins of men.

The criminal and dangerous nature of ſuch a conduct will farther appear from this, that it is by juſt and neceſſary conſequence forbidden in the word of God. There we find, that though in his ſovereign providence he permits the commiſſion of ſin, ſuffers his own people to continue mixed with ſinners in this ſtate, and makes their connection with them in ſome meaſure unavoidable, as a part of their trial, yet he hath expreſsly prohibited them from having any more communication with ſuch, than he himſelf hath made neceſſary. We are warned in Scripture, that "evil communications corrupt good manners," and therefore, that we muſt fly the ſociety of the ungodly. The Pſalmiſt tells us, "Bleſſed is the man that walketh not in the counſel of the ungodly, nor ſtandeth in the way of ſinners, nor ſitteth in the ſeat of the ſcornful," Pſal. i. 1. Agreeably to this the characters of good men in Scripture are always repreſented. Thus the Pſalmiſt David records his own reſolution, "I will ſet no wicked thing before mine eyes. I hate the work of them that turn aſide, it ſhall not cleave to me. A froward heart ſhall depart from

me, I will not know a wicked perſon," Pſal. ci. 3, 4. The ſame ſays elſewhere, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts," Pſal. cxix. 63.—"Depart from me ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God." ver. 115.

But there is no need of citing paſſages of Scripture to this purpoſe; it is well known, that good men, though they will be very cautious of raſhly determining characters that are doubtful, and will far leſs diſcover a proud and phariſaical contempt of any who may yet be veſſels of mercy, will, however, carefully avoid all unneceſſary communication with ſinners. They will neither follow their perſons from inclination, nor view their conduct with pleaſure. On the contrary, when they cannot wholly fly from their ſociety, it becomes a heavy burden, and in ſome caſes intolerable, and ſo as to require the interpoſition of the ſame kind Providence that "delivered juſt Lot, vexed with the filthy converſation of the wicked." Is there any conſiſtency between ſuch a character, and attending the ſtage with delight? Will thoſe who "behold tranſgreſſors, and are grieved," crowd with eagerneſs to the theatre, where the ſame perſons and actions are brought under review? Will what affected them with ſorrow in the commiſſion, be voluntarily choſen, and made ſubſervient to their pleaſure in the repetition?

I cannot help here calling to mind the anxious concern which wiſe and pious parents uſually ſhew for their children, on account of the ſnares to which they are unavoidably expoſed in an evil world. How carefully do they point out, and how ſolemnly

do they charge them to ſhun the paths in which deſtroyers go. They uſe this caution with reſpect to the world, even as under the government of God; and in ſo doing they follow the example of their Saviour, who, in the proſpect of leaving his diſciples, after many excellent advices, puts up for them this interceſſory prayer; "And now I am no more in the world, but theſe are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name thoſe whom thou haſt given me, that they may be one as we are.—I pray not that thou ſhouldeſt take them out of the world, but that thou ſhouldeſt keep them from the evil," John xvii. 11. 15. Can any expect that this prayer will be heard in their behalf, who are not content with ſeeing the world as it is ordered by a wiſe and holy God, but muſt ſee it over again, in a vile imitation by a ſinful man?

It will probably be ſaid, that this ſtrikes as much againſt hiſtory, at leaſt the writing and reading of human, commonly called, profane hiſtory, as againſt the writing and ſeeing of dramatic repreſentations. But the caſes are by no means the ſame; the knowledge of hiſtory is, in many reſpects, neceſſary for the great purpoſes of religion.—Were not this the caſe, there would be little difficulty in admitting the conſequence. Perhaps, even as it is, it had been better for the world that ſeveral ancient facts and characters, which now ſtand upon record, had been buried in oblivion *. At any rate it may be ſafely aſ-

* Perhaps some will be surprised at what is here said on the subject of history, who have not usually viewed it in this light. And indeed this is the great difficulty in the

firmed, that romances and fabulous narrations are a ſpecies of compoſition, from which the world hath received as little benefit, and as much hurt, as any that can be named, excepting plays themſelves, to which they are ſo nearly allied. The firſt are only exceeded by the laſt, as to their capacity of doing miſchief, by the circumſtances of action, and the preſence at once of ſo many perſons, among

whole of the present argument, to overcome ſtrong prepoſſeſſions, and to ſhew men the ſin and danger of a practice which they know to be common, and have been long accuſtomed to look upon as lawful and ſafe. For this reaſon, it is probable, that the beſt way of proving that the above aſſertion on the ſubject of hiſtory, is agreeable to Scripture and reaſon, will be by a caſe perfectly ſimilar but more frequently handled. Do not all Chriſtian writers, without exception, who treat of the government of the tongue, lay down this as a rule, that we are not to report the ſins of others though we know the truth of the facts, unleſs where it is neceſſary to ſome good end? Now why ſhould there be any different rule in writing, than in converſation? What is done either way, is the ſame in ſubſtance, viz. communicating information; and writing, which may be called viſible ſpeech, is much more laſting in its nature and extenſive in its effects. If any aſk, How or why the knowledge of hiſtory is neceſſary to the purpoſes of religion? I anſwer it is neceſſary for proving the truths of natural and confirming thoſe of revealed religion; for repelling the attacks of adverſaries, and giving us ſuch a view of the plan of providence, as may excite us to the exerciſe of the duties of adoration, thankfulneſs, truſt, and ſubmiſſion to the ſupreme Diſpoſer of all events. Real facts only are proper for this purpoſe, and not feigned ſtories, in the choice and dreſſing of which, experience teaches us, the great end is, that man be pleaſed, and not that God may be glorified.

whom by mutual ſympathy, the ſpiritual poiſon ſpreads faſter and penetrates deeper.

Leſt it ſhould be pretended that ſuch a turn is given to things in the repreſentation, as that, though the greateſt part of the actions repreſented are ill in themſelves, yet vice is reproached or ridiculed, virtue ſet upon a throne, rewarded and honoured: let it be called to mind that, as has been ſhewn above, the author is not left at liberty to do in this as he pleaſes. He muſt gratify the public taſte, and the rules he is obliged to obſerve, have rather the contrary effect. For he muſt diveſt his bad characters of what is moſt horrid and ſhocking, and preſent them leſs deformed than they really are. Beſides, though he may conceal a part, he muſt not alter nature ſo far as he goes, but take it as he finds it. Accordingly ſome of our modern critics tell us, that there ought to be no particular moral in a dramatic performance, becauſe that is a departure from nature, and ſo not in taſte.

It ought not to be forgotten, that attending dramatic repreſentations is not only ſeeing a great plurality of bad characters without neceſſity, and ſeeing them with patience, but it is ſeeing them with pleaſure. Whether or not entertainment be yielded to be the only or ultimate effect of plays, ſurely it cannot be denied to be one effect ſought and expected from them, and from every part of them. An actor is much applauded, and gives as much pleaſure to the ſpectators, when he repreſents a bad character to the life, as a good. Is there no danger then, that a heart ſoftened by delight, ſhould be more liable to infection from evil than at other

times? Is there no danger that an aſſociation ſhould be formed in the mind, between the ſenſe of pleaſure and the commiſſion of ſin? Will any perſon affirm, that in ſuch circumſtances he feels that holy indignation againſt ſin which every Chriſtian ought to conceive upon ſeeing it committed? or, that he is able to preſerve that awe and fear, which he ought to have of the juſt judgment of God, when he ſees the crimes that merit it boldly re-acted, and finely mimicked in a perſonated character?

So far is this from being the caſe, that every perſon attending the repreſentation of a play, enters in ſome meaſure himſelf, as well as the actors, into the ſpirit of each character, and the more ſo the better the action is performed. His attention is ſtrongly fixed, his affections are ſeized and carried away, and a total forgetfulneſs of every thing takes place, except what is immediately before him. Can the various paſſions be ſo ſtrongly excited as they are ſometimes known to be, and no effect remain? Will not the paſſion of love, for example, after it has been ſtrongly felt by the ſpectator in ſympathy with the actor, be a little more ready to recur, eſpecially as nature prompts, and various ſoliciting objects are daily preſented to his eye? The author terminates his plot as he ſees beſt, and draws what concluſions he thinks proper from his characters; but he has no reaſon to think that he can controul the paſſions which he raiſes in the ſpectators in the ſame manner, and not ſuffer them to exceed the bounds of his deſcription. Will not the paſſion of revenge, that right hand of falſe greatneſs of mind, after it has been ſtrongly excited in the theatre, be-

apt to riſe again upon every real or ſuppoſed provocation? Some learned obſervers of nature tell us, that every paſſion we feel cauſes a new modification of the blood and ſpirits; if there is any truth in this, then every paſſion excited in the theatre takes poſſeſſion for a time of the very animal frame, makes a ſeat to itſelf, and prepares for a ſpeedy return.

Having thus endeavoured to ſhew, that the ſtage, whether amuſement or inſtruction be aimed at in it, cannot be attended by any Chriſtian without ſin; there is a third general argument againſt it, which merits conſideration. It is, that no perſon can contribute to the encouragement of the ſtage, without being partaker of the ſins of others. This is proper to be attended to, as it is againſt a public theatre that the arguments in this eſſay are chiefly levelled; ſo that, if it be criminal at all, every perſon attending it, is not only faulty by his own proper conduct, but is farther chargeable with the guilt of ſeducing others. Beſides, without this the argument, to ſome, would not be altogether complete, for after all that has been advanced, there may be a few, who in a good meaſure yield it to be true, and yet have another ſubterfuge remaining. They acknowledge, perhaps, that it is a moſt hazardous amuſement, to which others ought ordinarily to be preferred: That the bulk of plays will, much more probably, pollute than improve the far greateſt part of thoſe who attend them. Yet ſtill they are apt to figure to themſelves particular caſes as exceptions from the general rule, and to ſuppoſe, there are *ſome* plays which may be attended, or at leaſt, that there are *ſome* perſons, who have ſo much clearneſs

of judgment, and ſo much conſtancy in virtue, as to ſeparate the corn from the chaff. At a particular time, they ſuppoſe, a perſon of this kind may, without receiving any hurt, be improved by the fine ſentiments contained in plays: and alſo learn ſomething to be applied to other purpoſes, of that force and juſtneſs of action, that grace and beauty of behaviour, which is no where ſeen in ſo great perfection as on the ſtage.

Upon this ſubject in general, it may be affirmed, that thoſe who have this confidence in the ſtrength of their own virtue, are far from being the perſons who may be moſt ſafely truſted in a place of danger. On the contrary, thoſe will probably be moſt truly ſtedfaſt, when expoſed to temptation, who are moſt diffident of themſelves, and do not wantonly run into it. Yet, ſince ſome may take encouragement from ſuch apprehenſions, it is proper to obſerve that, though there were truth in their pretence, yet would it not therefore be lawful for them to attend the theatre. They could not do ſo without contributing to the ſins of others, a thing expreſsly prohibited in the holy Scriptures, and indeed diametrically oppoſite to the two principal branches of true religion, concern for the glory of God, and compaſſion to the ſouls of men.

There are two ways in which the occaſional attending of plays, by thoſe who are of good character, even ſuppoſing it not hurtful to themſelves, contributes to the ſins of others. (1.) By ſupporting the players in that unchriſtian occupation. (2.) Encouraging, by their example, thoſe to attend all

plays indiſcriminately, who are in moſt danger of infection.

*Firſt*, It contributes to ſupport the players in an unchriſtian occupation. After what has been ſaid above, and which I now take for granted, on the impropriety of plays as an amuſement, and the impoſſibility of furniſhing a ſtage with nothing but ſound and wholeſome productions, little doubt can remain, that the occupation of players is inconſiſtent with the character of a Chriſtian. Whatever occaſional preſence may be to ſome ſpectators, continual performing can never be lawful to the actors. On the very beſt ſuppoſition, it is a life of perpetual amuſement, which is equally contrary to reaſon and religion. It is a mean proſtitution of the rational powers, to have no higher end in view, than contributing to the pleaſure and entertainment of the idle part of mankind, and inſtead of taking amuſement with the moderation of a Chriſtian, to make it the very buſineſs and employment of life. How ſtrange a character does it make for one to live, in a manner, perpetually in a maſk, to be much oftener in a perſonated than in a real character? And yet this is the caſe with all players, if to the time ſpent in the repreſentation, you add that which is neceſſary to prepare for their public appearances. What foul polluted minds muſt thoſe be, which are ſuch a receptacle of foreign vanities, beſides their own natural corruption, and where one ſyſtem or plan of folly is obliterated only to make way for another!

But the life of players is not only idle and vain, and therefore inconſiſtent with the character of a

Chriſtian, but it is ſtill more directly and groſsly cr
minal. We have ſeen above, that not only fro
the taſte of the audience, the prevailing tendenc
of all ſucceſsful plays muſt be bad, but that in th
very nature of the thing, the greateſt part of th
characters repreſented muſt be vicious. What the
is the life of a player? It is wholly ſpent in endea
vouring to expreſs the language, and exhibit a per
fect picture of the paſſions of vicious men. For thi
purpoſe they muſt ſtrive to enter into the ſpirit, an
feel the ſentiments proper to ſuch characters. Un
leſs they do ſo, the performance will be quite fain
and weak, if not faulty and wholly unnatural. An
can they do this ſo frequently without retaining muc
of the impreſſion, and at laſt becoming what in trut
they are ſo often in appearance? Do not the charac
ters of all men take a tincture from their employmen
and way of life? How much more muſt theirs b
infected, who are converſant, not in outward occu
pations, but in characters themſelves, the actions
paſſions and affections of men! If their perform
ance touch the audience ſo ſenſibly, and produce i
them ſo laſting an effect, how much more muſt th
ſame effects take place in themſelves, whoſe whol
time is ſpent in this manner!

This is ſo certain, and at the ſame time ſo acknow
ledged a truth, that even thoſe who are fondeſt o
theatrical amuſements, do yet notwithſtanding eſteen
the employment of players a mean and ſordid pro
feſſion. Their character has been infamous in al
ages, juſt a living copy of that vanity, obſcenity, and
impiety which is to be found in the pieces which
they repreſent. As the world has been polluted by

the ſtage, ſo they have always been more eminently ſo, as it is natural to ſuppoſe, being the very ciſterns in which this pollution is collected, and from which it is diſtributed to others. It makes no difference in the argument, that we muſt here ſuppoſe the ſtage to be regulated and improved; for as it hath been ſhewn, that it never can be ſo regulated as to be ſafe for the ſpectators, it muſt be always worſe for the actors, between whom and the audience the ſame proportion will ſtill remain. Can it then be lawful in any to contribute, in the leaſt degree, to ſupport men in this unhallowed employment? Is not the theatre truly and eſſentially, what has been often called rhetorically, the ſchool of impiety, where it is their very buſineſs to learn wickedneſs? And will a Chriſtian, upon any pretended advantage to himſelf, join in this confederacy againſt God, and aſſiſt in endowing and upholding the dreadful ſeminary?

*Secondly*, Men of good character going occaſionally to the theatre, contribute to the ſins of others, by emboldening thoſe to attend all plays indiſcriminately, who are in moſt danger of infection. If there be any at all, eſpecially if there be a great number, to whom the ſtage is noxious and ſinful, every one without exception is bound to abſtain. The apoſtle Paul expreſsly commands the Corinthians to abſtain from lawful things, when their uſing them would make their brother to offend, that is to ſay, would lead him into ſin. "But take heed, leſt by any means this liberty of yours become a ſtumbling-block to them that are weak. For if any man ſee thee which haſt knowledge, ſit

at meat in the idols temple, ſhall not the conſcience of him that is weak, be emboldened to eat thoſe things which are offered to idols? And through thy knowledge ſhall the weak brother periſh, for whom Chriſt died. But when ye ſin ſo againſt the brethren, and wound their weak conſcience, ye ſin againſt Chriſt. Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no fleſh while the world ſtandeth, leſt I make my brother to offend," 1 Cor. viii. 9—13.

There are many who ſeem to have entirely forgot that this precept is to be found in the word of God, and diſcover not the leaſt ſenſe of their obligation to comply with it. If by any plauſible pretences they imagine they can vindicate their conduct with regard to themſelves, or palliate it with excuſes, they are quite unmindful of the injury which they do to others. I ſpeak not here of offending, in the ſenſe in which that word is commonly, though unjuſtly taken, as diſpleaſing others. Such as are diſpleaſed with the conduct of thoſe who attend the theatre, becauſe they eſteem it to be ſinful, are not thereby offended in the Scripture ſenſe of the word, except ſo far as ſome few of them are provoked to unchriſtian reſentment, or induced to draw raſh and general concluſions, from the indiſcretion of particular perſons, to the prejudice of whole orders of men. But vaſt multitudes are truly offended, or made to offend, as they are led into a practice, which, whatever it be to thoſe who ſet the example, is undoubtedly pernicious to them. Is it poſſible to deny, that under the beſt regulation of the theatre that can reaſonably be

hoped for, to great numbers it muſt be hurtful, eſpecially as it is enticing to all? And, if that be but allowed, perſons of character and reputation cannot attend without contributing to the miſchief that is done.

Perhaps it will be objected to this application of the paſſage of ſcripture cited above, that the particular danger there pointed out by the apoſtle, is inducing men to venture upon a practice with a doubting conſcience. I think it highly probable, that this very preciſe caſe happens with many, who go to the theatre following the example of others. They are not entirely ſatisfied of its lawfulneſs, they ſtill have ſome inward reluctance of mind, but adventure to gratify a carnal inclination, being emboldened by the example of thoſe who are eſteemed men of underſtanding and worth. But even where their implicit truſt is ſo ſtrong as fully to ſatisfy them, and ſet their minds at eaſe, the apoſtle's argument holds with equal force, if thereby they are unavoidably led into ſin.

This will probably be looked upon as a very hard law, and it will be aſked, Is a man then never to do any thing that he has reaſon to believe will be miſinterpreted, or abuſed by others to their own hurt? The hardneſs of the law will wholly vaniſh, if we remember, that it is confined to things indifferent in their nature. In duties binding of their own nature, we are under no obligation to pay any regard to the opinion of others, or the conſequences of our conduct upon them. But in things originally indifferent, which become duties, or not, preciſely on account of their conſequences, there

we are to beware of making our brother to offend. The ſcripture rule is this, We muſt not commit the leaſt ſin under pretence of the moſt important end, though it were to ſave multitudes from ſins incomparably more heinous. But in matters of indifference, we are not to value the moſt beloved enjoyment ſo highly as to endanger the ſalvation of one ſoul by inſnaring it into ſin. And can a real believer have the ſmalleſt objection, the leaſt riſing thought againſt this equitable law? Shall we value any preſent gratification equally, nay, ſhall we once put it in the balance with the ſpiritual intereſt of an immortal ſoul? Now, who will be ſo ſhameleſs as to aſſert, that attending a public ſtage is to him a neceſſary duty? Or what defender of the ſtage will be ſo ſanguine as to affirm, that it is, or that he hopes to ſee it regulated ſo as to be ſafe or profitable to every mind? and yet till this is the caſe, it evidently ſtands condemned by the apoſtolic rule.

Since writing the above, I have met with a pamphlet juſt publiſhed, entitled, The morality of Stage-plays ſeriouſly conſidered. This author convinces me, that I have without ſufficient ground ſuppoſed, that nobody would affirm attending plays to be a neceſſary duty: for he has either done it, or gone ſo very near it, that probably the next author upon the ſame ſide will do it in plain terms, and aſſert, that all above the ſtation of tradeſmen who do not go to the play-houſe, are living in the habitual neglect of their duty, and ſinning grievouſly againſt God. If this looks ridiculous it is none of my fault, for I ſpeak it ſeriouſly: and it is a much more natural

conſequence from his reaſoning, than any he has drawn from it himſelf.

He conſiders the paſſage of the apoſtle Paul, and ſays, (which is true) that it holds only in the caſe of indifferent actions, but that we are to "do good in the face of prejudice." The way in which he ſhews it to be doing good, is pretty ſingular, but I paſs it by for a little, and obſerve, that probably he is not much accuſtomed to commenting on ſuch paſſages of ſcripture; for even granting his unreaſonable ſuppoſition, doing good indefinitely is not oppoſed to indifferent actions in this, or any ſimilar caſe. An action that is good in itſelf, is indifferent when it may be exchanged for another; when one as good, or better, may be put in its place. Nothing is oppoſed to indifferent actions here, but what is indiſpenſably neceſſary, and abſolutely binding, both in itſelf, and in its circumſtances. And indeed, though he is afraid at firſt to ſay ſo, he ſeems to carry the matter that length at laſt, making his concluſion a little broader than the premiſes, and ſaying in the cloſe of the paragraph upon that ſubject, "What they do to this purpoſe, either in oppoſing the bad or promoting the good, is MATTER OF DUTY, and their conduct in it is not to be regulated by the opinion of any perſon who is pleaſed to take offence *."

But how ſhall we refute this new and wonderful doctrine, of its being neceſſary that good men ſhould attend the theatre? I cannot think of a better way of doing it, than tearing off ſome of the drapery of words, with which it is adorned and diſguiſed, and ſetting his own aſſertions together in

* Page 23.

the form of a ſyllogiſm. "The manager of every theatre muſt ſuit his entertainments to the company, and if he is not ſupported by the grave and ſober, he muſt ſuit himſelf to the licentious and profane."—— "We know that in every nation there muſt be amuſements and public entertainments, and the ſtage has always made one in every civilized and poliſhed nation. We cannot hope to aboliſh it."——Ergo, According to this author, it is the duty of good men to attend the ſtage. But I leave the reader to judge, Whether from the firſt of his propoſitions, which is a certain truth, it is not more juſt to infer, that till the majority of thoſe who attend the ſtage are good, its entertainment cannot be fit for the Chriſtian ear; and becauſe that will never be, no Chriſtian ought to go there.

And what a ſhameful begging of the queſtion is his ſecond propoſition, "That we cannot hope to aboliſh it." It is hard to tell what we may hope for in this age, but we inſiſt that it ought to be aboliſhed. Nay, we do hope to aboliſh it juſt as much as other vices. We cannot hope to ſee the time when there ſhall be no gaming, cheating, or lying; but we muſt ſtill preach againſt all ſuch vices, and will never exhort good men to go to gaming-tables, to perſuade them to play fair, and leſſen the wickedneſs of the practice. In ſhort, it is a full refutation of the extravagant aſſertion of good men being obliged, as matter of duty, to go to the theatre, that no ſuch thing is commanded in the word of God, and therefore it is not, and cannot be neceſſary to any *.

* It is proper here to remark, how natural it was to ſuppoſe, that the argument would be carried this length, when

And since it is evidently pernicious to great numbers, it can be lawful to none.

It would give Christians a much more just, as well as more extensive view of their duty, than they commonly have, if they would consider their relation to, and necessary influence on one another. All their visible actions have an effect upon others as well as themselves. Every thing we see or hear makes some impression on us, though for the most part unperceived, and we contribute every moment, to form each other's character. What a melancholy view then does it give us of the state of religion among us at present, that when piety towards God has been excluded from many moral systems, and the whole of virtue confined to the duties of social life, the better half of these also should be cut off, and all regard to the souls of others forgotten or derided? Nothing indeed is left but a few expressions of compliment, a few insignificant offices of present conveniency; for that which some modern refiners have dignified with the name of virtue, is nothing else but polished luxury, a flattering of each other in their vices, a provocation of each other to sensual indulgence, and that "friendship of the world," which "is enmity with God."

I would now ask the reader, after perusing the preceding arguments against the stage, Whether he is convinced that it is inconsistent with the charac-

the stage came to be pleaded for as useful in promoting the interests of virtue. And therefore I have above taken notice, that these prophets run unsent, the propriety of which remark will now clearly appear.

ter of a Chriſtian, or not? If he ſhall anſwer in the negative, if he has ſtill ſome remaining argument in its defence, or ſome method, which has not occurred to me, to take off the force of the reaſoning, I would next aſk, Whether it does not at leaſt render it a doubtful point? Whether, joined with the concurrent teſtimony of the beſt and wiſeſt men in all ages againſt it, as it appeared among them, and the impurity and corruption that ſtill attends it, there is not at leaſt ſome ground of heſitation? And, if ſo much be but allowed, it becomes on this very account unlawful to every Chriſtian, who takes the word of God for the rule of his conduct. There clear evidence and full perſuaſion is required before an action can be lawful, and where doubt ariſes, we are commanded to abſtain. "Happy is he that condemneth not himſelf in that thing which he alloweth: and he that doubteth is damned, if he eat; becauſe he eateth not of faith, for whatſoever is not of faith is ſin," Rom. xiv. 22, 23.

Hitherto we have reaſoned againſt what is called a "well-regulated ſtage." That is to ſay, inſtead of attacking the corruptions which now adhere to it, we have endeavoured to ſhew, that from the purpoſe intended by it, from the preſent ſtate, and general taſte of mankind, and the nature of the thing itſelf, a public theatre is not capable of ſuch a regulation, as to make it conſiſtent with the purity of the Chriſtian profeſſion to attend or ſupport it. If any complain, that part of the above reaſoning is too abſtracted, and not quite level to the apprehenſion of every reader, let it be remembered, that it is direct-

ed againſt an idea ſo abſtracted, that it never yet did, and from what we have ſeen, there is reaſon to believe it never can exiſt. It is indeed altogether imaginary, and is dreſſed up by every author who defends it, in the manner and form that beſt pleaſes himſelf, ſo that it is infinitely leſs difficult to refute or ſhew the unlawfulneſs of a well regulated ſtage, than to know what it is.

If the authors on this ſubject would enter into particulars, and give us a liſt of the uſeful and inſtructive plays with which our ſtage is to be ſerved; lay down a plan of ſtrict diſcipline, for introducing and preſerving purity among the actors; and ſhew us by whom the managers are to be choſen, and their fidelity tried, with ſome general rules for their conduct, it might ſoon be determined by plain and ſimple arguments, whether ſuch an entertainment could be ſafely permitted to a Chriſtian, or not. But, when they give us no farther account of it, than by calling it a ſtage properly regulated, they involve themſelves at once in obſcurity, as to the very ſubject of their diſcourſe. It is no wonder then, that they can make a parade with a few glittering phraſes, as picture of nature, moral lecture, amiable character, compaſſion for virtue in diſtreſs, decency of the drama, and ſeveral others. We are put to a ſtand what to ſay to ſuch things, for if we ſpeak of the impure ſentiments of authors, or the wanton geſticulations of actors, all theſe are immediately given up, and yet the ſort remains as entire as ever. Therefore, the method taken in this treatiſe, with all the diſadvantages that attend it, was looked upon to be the beſt and the cleareſt that

could be chofen; to ſhew, that thoſe from whom a reformation of the ſtage muſt come, are neither able nor willing to make it; that the very materials of which this fine ſyſtem is to conſiſt are naught, and therefore, ſo muſt the product be always found upon trial.

It may indeed be matter of wonder, that among the many ſchemes and projects daily offered to the conſideration of the public, there has never been any attempt to point out a plauſible way, how the ſtage may be brought into, and kept in ſuch a ſtate of regulation as to be conſiſtent with the Chriſtian character. There have been attempts to ſhew how money may be in a manner created, and the national debt paid, or the annual ſupplies raiſed, without burdening the ſubject. Some, who have nothing of their own, have endeavoured to perſuade the reſt of mankind, that it is the eaſieſt thing imaginable to grow rich in a few years, with little labour, by the improvement of moor, moſs, or bees. But none, ſo far as I have heard or ſeen, have been ſo bold as to lay down a diſtinct plan for the improvement of the ſtage. When this is added to the conſiderations already mentioned, it will confirm every impartial perſon in the belief, that ſuch improvement is not to be expected.

I hope therefore, there may now be ſome proſpect of ſucceſs, in warning every one who wiſhes to be eſteemed a diſciple of Chriſt againſt the ſtage, as it hitherto has been, and now is. Experience is of all others the ſureſt teſt of the tendency of any practice. It is ſtill more to be depended on than the moſt plauſible and apparently concluſive reaſoning,

upon what hath never yet been tried. Let us then conſider, what hath been the ſpirit and tendency of almoſt the whole plays which have been repreſented, from time to time, upon the ſtage. Have not love and intrigue been their perpetual theme, and that not in a common and orderly way, but with reſiſtance and impediments, ſuch as rivalſhip and jealouſy, the oppoſition of parents, and other things of a ſimilar nature, that the paſſions may be ſtrongly excited, and that the force of love, and its triumph over every obſtacle, may be ſet before the audience as a leſſon? Is not the polite well-bred man the hero of ſuch plays, a character formed upon the maxims of the world, and chiefly ſuch of them as are moſt contrary to the goſpel? Are not unchriſtian reſentment and falſe honour the characteriſtics of every ſuch perſon?

What is the character of a clergyman when it is taken from the ſtage? If the perſon introduced is ſuppoſed to poſſeſs any degree of ability, hypocriſy is the leading part of the character. But for the moſt part, aukwardneſs, ignorance, dulneſs, and pedantry, are repreſented as inſeparable from men of that function. This is not done to correct theſe faults when appearing in ſome of that profeſſion, by comparing them with others free from ſuch reproachful defects, but it is the character of the clergyman in general, who is commonly introduced ſingle, and, compared with the men acquainted with the world, very little to his advantage. The truth is, it ſeems to be a maxim with dramatic authors, to ſtrip men of every profeſſion of their ſeveral excellencies, that the rake may be adorned with the

ſpoils; even learning is commonly aſcribed to him; how conſiſtently with truth or nature, and conſequently with taſte itſelf, I leave the reader to determine.

And where can the plays be found, at leaſt comedies, that are free from impurity, either directly or by alluſion and double meaning? It is amazing to think, that women who pretend to decency and reputation, whoſe brighteſt ornament ought to be modeſty, ſhould continue to abet, by their preſence, ſo much unchaſtity, as is to be found in the theatre. How few plays are acted which a modeſt woman can ſee, conſiſtently with decency in every part! And even when the plays are more reſerved themſelves, they are ſure to be ſeaſoned with ſomething of this kind in the prologue or epilogue, the muſic between the acts, or in ſome ſcandalous farce with which the diverſion is concluded. The power of cuſtom and faſhion is very great, in making people blind to the moſt manifeſt qualities and tendencies of things. There are ladies who frequently attend the ſtage, who if they were but once entertained with the ſame images in a private family, with which they are often preſented there, would riſe with indignation, and reckon their reputation ruined if ever they ſhould return. I pretend to no knowledge of theſe things, but from printed accounts, and the public bills of what plays are to be acted, ſometimes by the particular deſire of ladies of quality; and yet may ſafely affirm, that no woman of reputation (as it is called in the world) much leſs of piety, who has been ten times in a play-houſe, durſt repeat in company all that ſhe has heard there. With what

conſiſtency they gravely return to the ſame ſchools of lewdneſs, they themſelves beſt know.

It ought to be conſidered, particularly with regard to the younger of both ſexes, that, in the theatre, their minds muſt inſenſibly acquire an inclination to romance and extravagance, and be unfitted for the ſober and ſerious affairs of common life. Common or little things give no entertainment upon the ſtage, except when they are ridiculed. There muſt always be ſomething grand, ſurpriſing and ſtriking. In comedies, when all obſtacles are removed, and the marriage is agreed on, the play is done. This gives the mind ſuch a turn, that it is apt to deſpiſe ordinary buſineſs as mean, or deride it as ridiculous. Aſk a merchant, whether he chuſes that his apprentices ſhould go to learn exactneſs and frugality from the ſtage; or, whether he expects the moſt punctual payments from thoſe whoſe generoſity is ſtrengthened there, by weeping over virtue in diſtreſs? Suppoſe a matron coming home from the theatre filled with the ideas that are there impreſſed upon the imagination, how low and contemptible do all the affairs of her family appear, and how much muſt ſhe be diſpoſed, (beſides the time already conſumed) to forget or miſguide them!

The actors themſelves are a ſignal proof of this. How ſeldom does it happen, if ever, that any of them live ſober and regular lives, pay their debts with honeſty, or manage their affairs with diſcretion? They are originally men of the ſame compoſition with others, but their employment wholly incapacitates them for prudence and regularity, gives them a diſſipation of mind and unſtayed-

neſs of ſpirit, ſo that they cannot attend to the affairs of life. Nay, if I am rightly informed, that variety of characters which they put on in the theatre, deprives them of common ſenſe, and leaves them in a manner no character at all of their own. It is confidently ſaid, by thoſe who have thought it worth while to make the trial, that nothing can be more inſipid than the converſation of a player on any other ſubject than that of his profeſſion. I cannot indeed anſwer for this remark, having it only by report, and never having exchanged a word with one of that employment in my life. However, if it holds, a degree of the ſame effect muſt neceſſarily be wrought upon thoſe who attend the ſtage.

But folly or bad management is not all that is to be laid to the charge of players: they are almoſt univerſally vicious, and of ſuch abandoned characters, as might juſtly make thoſe who defend the ſtage, aſhamed to ſpeak of learning virtue under ſuch maſters. Can men learn piety from the profane, mortification from the ſenſual, or modeſty from harlots? And will any deny that hired ſtage-players have always, and that deſervedly, borne theſe characters? Nay, though it could be ſuppoſed, that the ſpectators received no hurt themſelves, how is it poſſible that the performances of ſuch perſons can be attended, or their trade encouraged, without ſin?

This ſhews alſo, that attending a good play, even ſuppoſing there were a few unexceptionable, cannot be vindicated upon Chriſtian principles. It is pleaded for the new tragedy * lately introduced into our theatre, that it is an attempt to reform the ſtage,

* Douglas.

and make it more innocent or more uſeful. What this piece is in itſelf, nobody can ſay with certainty till it be publiſhed, though the account given of it by report is not exceeding favourable. But let it be ever ſo excellent in itſelf, the bringing of one good play upon the ſtage is altogether inſufficient, nay, is a method quite improper for reforming it. An author of a truly good piece would rather bury it in oblivion, than lend his own credit, and that of his work, for the ſupport of thoſe that are bad. A Chriſtian can never attend the ſtage, conſiſtently with his character, till the ſcheme in general be made innocent or uſeful. He muſt not ſin himſelf, nor contribute to the ſins of others, in a certain degree, becauſe, unleſs he do ſo, they will ſin without him in a higher degree. In ſhort, ſuch an attempt can be conſidered in no other light, than as encouraging a pernicious practice, and ſupporting a criminal aſſociation. The better the play is, or the better the characters of thoſe who attend it are, the greater the miſchief, becauſe the ſtronger the temptation to others who obſerve it.

There is one inducement to attendance on the ſtage, which hath more influence than all the arguments with which its advocates endeavour to colour over the practice: that it is become a part of faſhionable education. Without it, young perſons of rank think they cannot have that knowledge of the world which is neceſſary to their accompliſhment; that they will be kept in ruſticity of carriage, or narrowneſs of mind, than which nothing is more contemptible in the eyes of the reſt of mankind; that they will acquire the character of

ſtiff and preciſe, and be incapable of joining in polite converſation, being ignorant of the topics upon which it chiefly turns. No better than theſe, it is to be feared, are the reaſons that many parents ſuffer their children to attend this and other faſhionable diverſions. How then ſhall we remove this difficulty? Why truly, by ſaying with the apoſtle John, to ſuch as will receive it, "All that is in the world, the luſt of the fleſh, and the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1 John ii. 16. It is certainly the greateſt madneſs to ſeek the knowledge of the world by partaking with bad men in their ſins. Whatever knowledge cannot otherwiſe be acquired, is ſhameful and not honourable. How cruel then are thoſe parents, who, inſtead of endeavouring to inſpire their children with a holy and manly reſolution, of daring to appear ſingular in an adherence to their duty, ſuffer them to be plunged in ſin, that they may not be defective in politeneſs. Why ſhould the world, or any thing elſe, be known, but in order to our ſpiritual improvement * ? Therefore, all that

* This is not meant to condemn all human accomplishments, which have not an immediate reference to our religious improvement, but to affirm, that they ought to be kept in a just subordination and subserviency, to the great and chief end of man. There are, no doubt, a great number of arts, both useful and ornamental, which have other immediate effects, than to make men holy; and because they are, by the greatest part of the world, abused to the worst of purposes, they are considered as having no connection with religion at all. But this is a mistake; for a good man will be directed in

is truly valuable, muſt, by the very ſuppoſition, be innocently learned, and to bear with a noble diſdain the ſcoffs of more experienced ſinners is the greateſt glory.

Like to the above is another argument in favour of the ſtage, that men muſt have amuſements, and that the ſtage is much better than many others, which would probably be put in its place. It is ſaid, that of all the time ſpent by the faſhionable part of the world, at preſent in diverſions, that which they allot to the ſtage is moſt innocently, or leaſt hurtfully employed. Is there any more in this, than a declaration of the ſhameful luxury and degeneracy of the preſent age, an alarming token of approaching judgment? Do not ſuch perſons know, that all ſerious Chriſtians condemn every one of theſe criminal pleaſures, and will never allow it as any advantage to exchange one of them for another? But it is leſs ſurpriſing to hear ſuch palliative arguments uſed in converſation: an author above referred to has been bold enough, in print, to reaſon in the ſame way. He ſays, "That no abuſe was

the choice and application of all such arts, by the general and leading purpose of his life. And as he who eats for no other or higher end than pleasing his palate, is justly condemned as a mean and groveling sensualist, so, whoever has no farther view in his education and accomplishment, than to shine and make a figure in the fashionable world does not in that respect act the part of a Christian. In short, these arts are among the number of indifferent things, which should be supremely and ultimately directed to the glory of God. When they are not capable of this, either immediately or remotely, much more when they are contrary to it, they must be condemned.

ever admitted on any ſtage, but might paſs for perfect decency, when compared to what may have been often heard of, at a goſſipping, a merry making, or a meeting of young fellows *." Again, after telling us that we cannot hope to aboliſh the ſtage, he ſays, "And if we could, we ſhould only make way for the return of drunkenneſs, gaming, and rude cabals, which the more decent converſation and manners of civilized times have in a great manner aboliſhed." I lay hold of this gentleman's reaſoning, who pleads for civilizing the world, and not ſanctifying it, as a confeſſion of the weakneſs of his cauſe, and a confirmation of all the arguments produced in this treatiſe againſt the ſtage. For, if he meant to ſhew, that ſtage-plays were agreeable to the purity of the goſpel, that drunkenneſs is worſe, (if indeed it be ſo) could be no evidence of it at all. He muſt therefore, if he ſpeaks to any purpoſe, plead for the toleration of ſinful diverſions, becauſe they are incomparatively leſs ſinful than others; and if that is the caſe, I deteſt his principles, and ſo will every Chriſtian.

Having mentioned this author, perhaps it may be expected, that I would take ſome notice of the other arguments brought by him in defence of the ſtage. It is not eaſy either to enumerate or comprehend them, they are thrown together in ſuch confuſion, and expreſſed in ſuch vague and general terms. He ſays, (page 3.) "The people of this iſland are not inferior to thoſe of any other age or country whatever. This will be a preſumption,

* Morality of Stage-Plays ſeriously conſidered, p. 19.

that if plays are a poiſon, it is at leaſt but ſlow in its operation." And, p. 17. "We may venture to aſk, Whether knowledge, whether induſtry, and commerce have declined in this city, (Edinburgh) ſince the play-houſe was firſt opened here? It will be owned, that they have rather increaſed." I would venture to aſk, What ſort of an argument is this, and what follows from it, though both his aſſertions were allowed to be true, which yet may eaſily be in many reſpects controverted? If the ſtage, as he would inſinuate, be the cauſe of our improvement, then is his argument ſelf-contradictory, for we ought to be greatly inferior in purity to the people of other countries, who have enjoyed the reforming ſtage much longer, which is contrary to his ſuppoſition. The truth is, the ſtage is not the cauſe, but the conſequence of wealth; and it is neither the cauſe nor conſequence of goodneſs or knowledge, except ſo far as it certainly implies more knowledge than uncultivated ſavages poſſeſs, and is only to be found in what this author calls civilized nations. How eaſy were it for me to name ſeveral vices unknown to barbarians, which prevail in places of taſte and poliſhed manners. Should I at the ſame time inſinuate, that theſe vices have contributed to improve us in knowledge and taſte, it would be juſt ſuch an argument as is here uſed in favour of the ſtage, and the plain meaning of both is, the abuſe of knowledge is the cauſe of it.

It were worth while to conſider a little our improvements in knowledge in this age, which are often the boaſt of not the moſt knowing writers.

Perhaps it may be allowed, that there is now in the world a good deal of knowledge of different kinds, but it is plain we owe it to the labours of our predeceſſors, and not our own. And therefore, it is to be feared, we may improve it no better than many young men do, who come to the eaſy poſſeſſion of wealth of their father's getting. They neither know the worth nor the uſe of it, but ſquander it idly away, in the moſt unprofitable or hurtful purſuits. It is doubtleſs, an eaſy thing at preſent, to acquire a ſuperficial knowledge, from magazines, reviews, dictionaries, and other helps to the ſlothful ſtudent. He is now able, at a very ſmall expence, to join the beau and the ſcholar, and triumphs in the taſte of this enlightened age, of which he hath the comfort to reflect, that he himſelf makes a part. But for our mortification, let us recollect, that as ſeveral writers have obſerved, human things never continue long at a ſtand. There is commonly a revolution of knowledge and learning, as of riches and power. For as ſtates grow up from poverty to induſtry, wealth, and power; ſo, from theſe they proceed to luxury and vice; and by them are brought back to poverty and ſubjection. In the ſame manner, with reſpect to learning, men riſe from ignorance to application; from application to knowledge; this ripens into taſte and judgment: then, from a deſire of diſtinguiſhing themſelves, they ſuperadd affected ornaments, become more fanciful than ſolid; their taſte corrupts with their manners, and they fall back into the gulph of ignorance. The ſeveral ſteps of theſe gradations commonly correſpond; and if we deſire to know in what period of

each, we of this nation are at preſent, it is probable, we are in the age of luxury, as to the firſt, and in the eve at leaſt of a falſe and frothy taſte as to learning; and may therefore fear, that as a late very elegant writer expreſſes it, "We ſhall relapſe faſt into barbariſm."

Another argument produced by this author is, that the apoſtle Paul, in preaching at Athens, quotes a ſentence from one of the Greek poets; and, in writing to the Corinthians, has inſerted into the ſacred text a line from a Greek play, which now ſubſiſts.—"This (he ſays) is ſufficient to connect the defence of plays with the honour of ſcripture itſelf." The fact is not denied, though he has given but a poor ſpecimen of the knowledge of this age, by miſtaking, in the firſt of theſe remarks, the expreſſion quoted by the apoſtle; for this ſentence, "In him we live, and move, and have our being," which, he ſays, is a very ſublime expreſſion, and beautifully applied by the apoſtle, was not cited from the poet, but the following, "For we are alſo his offſpring." But ſuppoſing he had (as he eaſily might) have hit upon the true citation, what follows from it? Did ever any body affirm, that no poet could write, or no player could ſpeak any thing that was true? And what is to hinder an inſpired writer from judging them out of their own mouths? What concern has this with the ſtage? If it implies any defence of the ſtage in general, it muſt imply a ſtronger defence of the particular play and poem, from which the citations are taken. Now, I dare ſay, neither this author, nor any other will aſſert, that theſe are in all reſpects agreeable to

the Chriſtian character. Theſe citations do no other way connect the defence of the ſtage with the honour of ſcripture, than a miniſter's citing in writing, or diſcourſe, a paſſage from Horace or Juvenal, would connect the defence of all the obſcenity that is to be found in the reſt of their works, with the honour of preaching.

The only thing further in this eſſay not obviated in the preceding diſcourſe, is what he ſays on the ſubject of the poor. "That the expence laid out on the ſtage does not hinder the charitable ſupply of the poor, and that they ſuffer no loſs by it, for it comes at laſt into the hands of the poor, and is paid as the price of their labour.—Every player muſt be maintained, clothed, and lodged." It does not ſuit with my preſent purpoſe to enter into controverſial altercation, or to treat this author with that ſeverity he deſerves; and therefore I ſhall only ſay, that his reaſoning upon this ſubject is the very ſame from which Doctor Mandeville draws this abſurd and hated conſequence, "Private vices are public benefits."

The truth is, a ſerious perſon can ſcarce have a ſtronger evidence of the immorality of the ſtage, than the peruſal of theſe little pieces of ſatire, which have been publiſhed, in ſo great a variety, againſt the preſbytery of Edinburgh, within theſe few weeks, becauſe of their public admonition againſt it. They offer no other defence, but deriding the preaching of the goſpel, blaſphemouſly comparing the pulpit with the ſtage, and recrimination upon ſome who are ſuppoſed to live inconſiſtently with their character. It is not worth while to

ſpend three words in determining whether drunkenneſs, deceit, and hypocriſy are worſe than the ſtage or not: but if that is the ſtrongeſt argument that can be offered in its ſupport, wo to all thoſe who attend it. The new reformed tragedy has indeed been very unlucky in its advocates. There is an old ſaying, That a man is known by his company. If this be true alſo of a play, which one would think it ſhould, as it muſt be chiefly to the taſte of congenial minds, by thoſe who have appeared in defence of Douglas, it is a work of very little merit.

It may be expected, that, having brought this performance on the field, I ſhould add ſome further reflections, upon the aggravated ſin of Miniſters writing plays, or attending the ſtage. But though it is a very plain point, and indeed, becauſe it is ſo, it would draw out this treatiſe to an immoderate length. If any man makes a queſtion of this, he muſt be wholly ignorant of the nature and importance of the miniſterial character and office. Theſe, therefore, it would be neceſſary to open diſtinctly, and to conſider the ſolemn charge given to miniſters in ſcripture, to watch over the ſouls of their people as thoſe "who muſt give an account unto God," to give themſelves wholly to their duty, ſince ſome of thoſe committed to them are from day to day, entering on an unchangeable ſtate, whoſe blood, when they die unconverted, ſhall be required at the hand of the unfaithful paſtor. None can entertain the leaſt doubt upon this ſubject, who believe the teſtimony of Moſes and the prophets, of Chriſt and

his apoſtles, and, if they believe not their writings, neither will they believe my words.

Inſtead therefore of endeavouring to prove, I will make bold to affirm, that writing plays is an employment wholly foreign to the office, and attending theatrical repreſentations an entertainment unbecoming the character of a miniſter of Chriſt: And muſt not both, or either of them, be a ſacrilegious abſtraction of that time and pains, which ought to have been laid out for the benefit of his people? Is it not alſo flying in the face of a clear and late act of parliament, agreeably to which the Lords of Council and Seſſion not long ago found the ſtage contrary to law in this country? And though the law is eluded, and the penalty evaded, by adverti-ſing a concert, after which will be performed, gratis, a tragedy, &c; yet ſurely, the world in judging of characters, or a church court in judging of the conduct of its members, will pay no regard to the poor and ſhameful evaſion. Can we then think of this audacious attempt at the preſent juncture, without applying to ourſelves the words of Iſaiah, "And in that day did the Lord God of hoſts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldneſs, and to girding with ſackcloth, and behold joy and gladneſs, ſlaying oxen and killing ſheep, eating fleſh and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hoſts, Surely this iniquity ſhall not be purged from you till you die, ſaith the Lord of hoſts," Iſa. xxii. 12, 13, 14.

A

# LETTER

RESPECTING

## *PLAY-ACTORS.*

SIR,

THERE appeared in the national Gazette of the — of March laſt, a paſſage ſaid to be taken from a French publication, which no doubt the editor of the Gazette thought worthy of the public eye. It was to the following purpoſe:—It muſt appear very ſurpriſing that even down to the expiration of the French Monarchy, there was a character of diſgrace affixed to the profeſſion of a player, eſpecially when compared to the kindred profeſſions of a preacher or pleader, although the talents neceſſary to theſe occupations are as much inferior to thoſe of a good comedian, as the talents of a drug-pounding apothecary to thoſe of a regular bred phyſician; and that it is hoped that the recovery of the character due to theatrical merit, will contribute not a little to the improvement of future manners.

I have long expected to ſee ſome remarks publiſhed on this ſingular ſentiment, but, either nobody has thought it worthy of their attention, or the ſtrictures have not fallen in my way; therefore as this ſubject is not one of thoſe that loſe their importance or propriety by a ſhort lapſe of time; and

as, on the contrary, the preſent controverſy in Philadephia, on the application to the legiſlature againſt the ſtage, ſeems to render it peculiarly ſeaſonable, I beg the favour of you to publiſh the following obſervations.

The author of the paragraph publiſhed by Mr Freneau, though a warm advocate for the theatre, vouches for me as to the fact that there has been a character of diſgrace for many ages, impreſſed upon the theatrical profeſſion. Though he had not affirmed it, the fact is undoubtedly certain, that the theatrical profeſſion has had a diſgrace affixed to it from the earlieſt times, and in all the countries where theatres have been in uſe.

Public actors on the ſtage were counted infamous by the Roman law, they were excommunicated by the church from the time of the introduction of Chriſtianity into the Roman empire, even to the time mentioned by the author of the above paragraph, the expiration of the French Monarchy.

If this had been only occaſional, local, and temporary, it might have been conſidered as owing to ſome of thoſe accidental, but tranſient cauſes, which ſometimes produce remarkable effects for a little time, and then wholly ceaſe. But ſo uniform and ſo general an effect muſt have ſome adequate and permanent cauſe or cauſes to produce it—which is to be the ſubject of the preſent inquiry.

I have only to add as to the fact, that even the preſent living, warmeſt and moſt zealous advocates for the ſtage have not been able to efface this impreſſion from their own minds. There does not exiſt in Philadelphia, or any where elſe, any perſon

of rank or character, who would be pleaſed with an alliance with the ſtage, either by their ſon's marriage with an actreſs, or by their daughters being married to actors.

Before entering into the principal part of the ſubject, it will be neceſſary that the reader ſhould give particular attention to the following remark. The infamy which has attended the profeſſion of players belongs wholly to the profeſſion itſelf, and not to the perſons, or rather circumſtances by which they may be diſtinguiſhed. Players when they are ſeen on the ſtage, are dreſſed in the fineſt habits, aſſume the manners, and ſpeak the language of kings and queens, princes and princeſſes, heroes and heroines, which is a very different ſituation from thoſe who belong to what are ſometimes called the lower claſſes of life. Thoſe who follow the mechanic arts are ſometimes conſidered as in a ſtate of diſgrace, but it is wholly owing not to their profeſſion, but to the poverty and want of education of a great majority of them. The profeſſion is lawful, laudable, uſeful, and neceſſary. Let me ſuppoſe a blackſmith, a weaver, a ſhoemaker, a carpenter, or any other of the machanic profeſſions, and ſuppoſe that, by activity and induſtry he becomes wealthy, and inſtead of a work-ſhop, ſets up a factory; if he becomes rich early enough in life, to give his children a good education and a handſome fortune, tell me who is the perſon, who would refuſe his alliance or be aſhamed of his connection? Is it not quite otherwiſe as to players, with whom though eminent in their profeſſion, as Moliere and Madamoiſelle Clairon in France, Garrick, Mrs Siddons, and Mrs

Bellamy in England, I believe there is hardly any example of any perſon of decent ſtation, or of middling fortune who would be ambitious of ſuch a family connection. Therefore, I repeat it, and deſire it may be kept in view in the whole of this reaſoning, that the diſgrace impreſſed upon the character of players belongs to the profeſſion, and not to the perſon. Nay, though according to the old ſaying, *exceptio firmat regulam*, there ſhould be an inſtance or two picked up in diſtant ages, in which ſuperlative merit, overcame the general prepoſſeſſion, ſuch as Roſcius in Rome, Moliere in France, and Shakeſpeare in England, this would not hinder the certainty or importance of the remark in general, of the opprobrium that follows the profeſſion. I now proceed to the reaſons on which the fact is founded.

*Firſt*, All powers and talents whatever, though excellent in themſelves, when they are applied to the ſingle purpoſe of anſwering the idle, vain, or vicious part of ſociety, become contemptible.

There is not upon record among the ſayings of bold men, one more remarkable than that of Sobrius the tribune, to Nero the Roman Emperor; when aſked by the emperor, why he who was one of his perſonal guards, had conſpired againſt him? He anſwered, I loved you as much as any man, as long as you deſerved to be loved, but I began to hate you, when, after the murder of your wife and mother, you become a charioteer, a *comedian* and a buffoon. I am ſenſible, that in this reaſoning, I conſider theatrical pieces, properly ſpeaking, as intended for amuſement. I am not however ignorant, that ſome have

dignified them with the character of ſchools or leſſons of morality.

But as they have been generally called, and are ſtill called by the writers in the Philadelphia Newspapers, *amuſements*, ſo I am confident every body muſt perceive, that this was their original purpoſe, and will be their capital and their principal effect. It ſeems to me of conſequence in this argument to obſerve, that what is true of theatrical exhibitions is true of every other effect of human genius or art; when applied to the purpoſes of amuſement and folly, they become contemptible. Of all external accompliſhments, there is none that has been for many ages held in greater eſteem than good horſemanſhip. It has been ſaid, that the human form never appears with greater dignity, than when a handſome man appears on horſeback, with proper and elegant management of that noble creature. Yet when men employ themſelves in ſingular and whimſical feats, ſtanding inſtead of riding upon a horſe at full gallop, or upon two horſes at once, or other feats of the like nature, in order to amuſe the vain, and gather money from the fooliſh, it immediately appears contemptible. And for my own part, I would no more hold communication with a maſter of the circus than a manager of the theatre. And I ſhould be ſorry to be thought to have any intimacy with either the one or the other.

The general obſervation which I have made, applies to all human arts of every kind and claſs. Muſic has always been eſteemed one of the fineſt arts, and was originally uſed in the worſhip of God, and the praiſe of heroes. Yet when muſic is ap-

plied to the purpoſes of amuſement only, it becomes wholly contemptible. And I believe, the public performers, from the men-ſingers and women-ſingers of Solomon, to the ſingers in the preſent theatres, are conſidered as in a diſgraceful calling. I am happy to have even Lord Cheſterfield on politeneſs, for my aſſiſtant in this cauſe: for though he acknowledges muſic to be one of the fine arts, yet he thinks to be too great a connoiſſeur, and to be always fiddling and playing, is not conſiſtent with the character of a gentleman.

In the *ſecond* place, As players have been generally perſons of looſe morals, ſo their employment directly leads to the corruption of the heart. It is an allowed principle, among critics, that no human paſſion or character, can be well repreſented, unleſs it be felt: this they call entering into the ſpirit of the part. Now, I ſuppoſe, the following philoſophical remark is equally certain, that every human paſſion, eſpecially when ſtrongly felt, gives a certain modification to the blood and ſpirits, and makes the whole frame more ſuſceptible of its return. Therefore, whoever has juſtly and ſtrongly acted human paſſions, that are vicious, will be more prone to theſe ſame paſſions; and indeed, with reſpect to the whole character, they will ſoon be in reality, what they have ſo often ſeemed to be.

This applies to the whole extent of theatrical repreſentation. Whoever has acted the part of a proud or revengeful perſon, I ſhould not like to fall in his way, when offended: and if any man has often acted the part of a rogue or deceiver, I ſhould not be willing to truſt him with my money. It may ei-

ther be added, as another remark, or conſidered as a further illuſtration of the one laſt made, that players, by ſo frequently appearing in an aſſumed character, loſe all character of their own. Nothing, ſays an eminent and learned writer, "is more aukward and inſipid, than a player out of the line of his own profeſſion." And indeed what muſt that memory and brain be, where the conſtant buſineſs of its poſſeſſor is to obliterate one ſcene or ſyſtem of folly, only to make way for another?

In the *third* place, I cannot help thinking, it is of ſome moment to obſerve, that players, in conſequence of their profeſſion, appearing continually in an aſſumed character, or being employed in preparing to aſſume it, muſt loſe all ſenſe of ſincerity and truth. Truth is ſo ſacred a thing, that even the leaſt violation of it, is not without its degree of guilt and danger. It was far from being ſo abſurd as it often has been ſaid to be, what the old Spartan anſwered to an Athenian, who ſpoke to him of the fine leſſons found in their tragedies: "I think I could learn virtue much better from our own rules of truth and juſtice, than by hearing your lies."

I will here obſerve, that ſome very able and judicious perſons have given it as a ſerious and important advice to young perſons, to guard againſt mimicking and taking off others, as it is called, in language, voice, and geſture; becauſe it tends to deſtroy the ſimplicity and dignity of perſonal manners and behaviour. I myſelf, in early life, knew a young man of good talents, who abſolutely unfitted himſelf for public ſpeaking, by this practice. He was educated for the miniſtry, and was in every reſpect

well qualified for the office; but having without ſuſpicion, frequently amuſed himſelf and others, by imitating the tones and geſtures of the moſt eminent preachers of the city where he lived, when he began to preach himſelf, he could not avoid falling into one or other of thoſe tones and manners which he had ſo often mimicked. This, as ſoon as it was perceived, threw the audience into a burſt of laughter, and he was ſoon obliged to quit the profeſſion altogether, for no other reaſon, than he had thus ſpoiled himſelf by the talent of imitation.—I may ſay further, in ſupport of this remark, that I have known no inſtance of one eminent for mimicking, who did not in time make himſelf contemptible.

But the human paſſion that makes the moſt conſpicuous figure in the theatre, is love. A play without intrigue and gallantry, would be no play at all. This paſſion is of all others, that which has produced the greateſt degree of guilt and miſery, in the hiſtory of mankind. Now is it, or can it be denied, that actors in the theatre are trained up in the knowledge and exerciſe of this paſſion, in all its forms? It ſeems to have been a ſentiment of this kind, that led a certain author to ſay, that to ſend young people to the theatre to form their manners, is to expect, "that they will learn virtue from profligates, and modeſty from harlots."

Theſe remarks ſeem to me fully ſufficient to account for the diſgrace that has ſo generally followed the profeſſion of an actor. I ſhall only add a few words upon an opinion to be found in Werenfels and ſome other eminent authors. They condemn public theatres, and deſpiſe hired players: but they

recommend acting pieces by young perſons, in ſchools or in private families, as a mean of obtaining grace and propriety in pronunciation. Of this I ſhall juſt obſerve, that though this practice is much leſs dangerous than a public theatre, yet it does not ſeem to me to be of much neceſſity for obtaining the end propoſed. And I dare ſay, that if this practice were often repeated, the fame that may be acquired at ſuch exhibitions, would, upon the whole, be very little to the honour or benefit of thoſe who acquired it.

I will conclude this eſſay by an obſervation on the compariſon made by the French writer, mentioned in the beginning, between the talents neceſſary to a good preacher or pleader, and thoſe neceſſary to a good play-actor. I wiſh he had mentioned the talents and qualifications, that we might have been able to examine his reaſoning. As for my own part, I can recollect but two which are eſſentially requiſite to a player, memory and mimickry; and I have known both theſe talents poſſeſſed in great perfection, by men who were not in underſtanding many degrees above fools; and on the contrary, ſome of the firſt men whom hiſtory records, that were no way remarkable in point of memory, and totally deſtitute of the other quality.

# ECCLESIASTICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

OR, THE

# ARCANA OF CHURCH POLICY.

BEING AN

## HUMBLE ATTEMPT

TO OPEN THE

## *MYSTERY OF MODERATION.*

WHEREIN IS SHEWN,

A PLAIN AND EASY WAY OF ATTAINING TO THE CHARACTER OF A MODERATE MAN, AS AT PRESENT IN REPUTE IN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

TO THE

# DEPARTED GHOST,

OR

# SURVIVING SPIRIT,

OF THE LATE

*Reverend Mr.* ———, *Miniſter in* ———.

WORTHY SIR,

DURING a great part of the time I ſpent in compoſing the following Treatiſe, I was fully reſolved to have ſent it abroad by itſelf, and not to have dedicated it to any perſon in the world; and indeed, in a confined ſenſe of the word *world*, you ſee I have ſtill kept my reſolution. The reaſon of this my intended purpoſe was, that I find the right honourable the Earl of Shafteſbury, in an advertiſement, or ticket, prefixed to his works, hath expreſſed a contempt and diſdain of all dedications, prefaces, or other diſcourſes, by way of forerunners to a book. This he ſeems to think a mean and cowardly way in an author of creeping into the world, and begging the reception which he dares not claim.

Being ſatisfied, therefore, of the juſtneſs of this obſervation, and being alſo ſomewhat confident (as his lordſhip ſeems to have been) of the intrinſic worth of my performance, I intended to have come forth in this maſterly manner.

But, upon more mature deliberation, I diſcovered, that the only objections againſt dedications were

the ſelf-diffidence juſt now mentioned, and the ſuſpicion of flattery for ſelfiſh ends, which is ſo contrary to diſintereſted benevolence; ſo that if I could frame a dedication which ſhould be quite beyond the imputation of any of theſe two purpoſes, I ſhould then wholly eſcape his lordſhip's cenſure.

This aim, I think, I have fallen nothing ſhort of, when I have dedicated this book to you, moſt illuſtrious SHADE! as my moſt malignant enemies cannot but grant, that I could have no expectation of your encouraging me, either by buying my book, recommending it to others, or giving it away to the poor; nay, or even ſo much as for my tranſlation to a better benefice in aſſembly or commiſſion.

It ſtartled me a little, that this conduct might perhaps by evil-diſpoſed perſons, be repreſented as an approach to popery, and reſembling their worſhipping of ſaints: but I hope this can ſcarcely be imputed to me, in the preſent caſe, ſince you never were eſteemed a ſaint while you lived, nor ever thirſted after that title.

Another more material objection occurred to me, That a dedication to a dead man, is either almoſt or altogether unprecedented. But I am not much concerned though this method of proceeding ſhould be thought bold and new, becauſe this is the character which the incomparable Mr —— gives of his own eſſays upon the principles of morality and natural religion. Beſides, I am not altogether deſtitute of authority: for the memorable Dean Swift has uſed the freedom to dedicate his *Tale of a Tub* to *Prince Poſterity*. I have alſo ſeen a ſatirical poem, called *Jure Divino*, dedicated, with great ſolemnity, to

Prince (or rather, I believe, to King) Reaſon. If, therefore, one of theſe authors might dedicate a book to a faculty of the human mind, and the other to an abſtract idea, I hope it is no great preſumption in me to dedicate mine to you, though "in ſtatue mortuorum;" eſpecially as there is not a living man who hath ſo good a claim to the compliment of a treatiſe upon my ſubject.

But a more gravelling difficulty than any of theſe, kept me ſome time in ſuſpence, *viz.* how to get the book preſented to you, as I did not find in myſelf any inclination to depart this life in order to tranſport it. After much trouble, I was at length relieved by reflecting, that Mr Pope has aſſured us, that the ghoſts of departed ladies always haunt the places in which they delighted while they were alive; and therefore, from analogy, it is to be ſuppoſed, that the ſame thing holds with regard to departed miniſters. If this is the caſe, I look upon it as certain, that your chief reſidence is in the aſſembly-houſe at Edinburgh, where you have, in your life-time, both given and received ſo much pleaſure. For though I will not limit you, in your unembodied ſtate, from making circuits through the country, and viſiting ſynods, or preſbyteries, particularly in the M——ſe and G——y, where there are ſo many men after your own heart; yet, I dare ſay, you will not be abſent from the aſſembly, nor any of the quarterly meetings of the commiſſion, which hath ſo often ſaved the church from impending dangers.

It is therefore my purpoſe to go to Edinburgh in May next, when the aſſembly meets, of which I am a member, and there to lay before you my perfor-

mance, hoping it will prove moſt delicious and ſavoury to all your ſenſes, to the names of which, and the manner of their preſent operation, I am wholly a ſtranger.

It is probable you have not been accuſtomed, theſe two or three years paſt, to hear your own praiſes celebrated; and therefore I ſhall no farther launch out into them than to ſay, that there is not one branch of the character recommended in the following pages in which you were not eminent; and that there never was one ſtone by you left unturned, for promoting the good cauſe.——That you may ſtill ſit upon the throne, and, by your powerful, though inviſible influence, make the intereſt of moderation prevail, is the ardent wiſh, and the pious prayer of,

SIR,

YOUR MOST OBEDIENT,

AND ADMIRING SERVANT,

THE

# PREFACE.

GRATITUDE obligeth me to acknowledge the kind reception which the world hath given to the following generous efforts, for the honour of our church. This ſhews, either that panegyric is by no means ſo unacceptable to mankind in general, as ſome ill-natured authors inſinuate; or that this of mine hath been executed with very uncommon ſkill. If this laſt ſhould be the true ſolution, it would give me a double ſatisfaction. However, as the love of detraction, in ſome perſons, is incurable, and as many have ſuch ulcerated minds, that there is no poſſibility of applying to them, even in the ſofteſt and moſt friendly manner, without offending them; to prevent the ſpreading of any ſuch baleful influence, I think it proper to add a few things upon the ſtructure of this performance; part of which ſhould have accompanied the firſt edition, if it had not pleaſed the publiſher to print it without any communication with the author.

From the beginning I foreſaw it would occur as an objection, that I have not properly denominated that party in the church which I have choſen to celebrate by the words *moderation* and *moderate men*. It is alledged that, for theſe two or three years paſt, they have made little uſe of theſe words, and have choſen rather to repreſent themſelves as ſupporters of the conſtitution, as acting upon con-

ſtitutional principles, as lovers of order, and enemies to confuſion, &c. while at the very ſame time, the oppoſite party have taken up the title of *moderation*, and pretend to be acting upon *moderate principles*. It is alſo hinted, that the juſt ſeverities which the times render neceſſary, require a different phraſeology.

In anſwer to this I obſerve, that my treatiſe has really been a work of time (as, I hope, appears from its maturity) the moſt part of it having been compoſed above two years ago, and before this change of language was introduced. It was originally intended only to exhibit a general view of the different parties in religion and learning among us; though it hath now admitted a very particular account of the lateſt and moſt recent differences in the church, chiefly becauſe *the preſent* ſeems likely to be an *æra* of ſome conſequence, and to be big with ſome very great events, as well as perſons. Beſides, I conſider, that this name of *moderate men* was much longer the deſignation of my friends, than thoſe lately invented; and as they do not even at preſent allow the claim of their enemies to that character, it is probable they intend to take it up again, as ſoon as the deſigns now upon the anvil ſhall be completely executed. As to the name of *moderation* being inconſiſtent with a proper vigour, in ſupport of their own meaſures, and wholeſome ſeverities againſt their enemies, it is an objection altogether frivolous, as appears from the following examples: A certain miniſter being aſked the character of a friend of his, who had come up to the aſſembly, and particularly whether or not he was a

*moderate man?* anſwered, *O yes, fierce for moderation!*

I think it proper to inform the reader, that one great reaſon of the uncommon choice of a patron to this work was, an opinion I had long entertained, and in ſupport of which I could alledge very ſtrong arguments, from the ſayings of ſome great men and philoſophers, as well as the practice of a famous ancient nation, with regard to their kings; that the true and proper time of aſcertaining and fixing a man's character is when he has done his whole work; and that poſterity hath as good a right to the poſſeſſion and uſe of his fame after death, as his contemporaries to his abilities during his life. At the ſame time, though the author had a particular hero in view, yet he choſe to publiſh it without mentioning his name, or place of abode, or indeed any circumſtance foreign to the character which might diſtinguiſh the perſon. The deſign of acting in this manner was, that in caſe the world ſhould univerſally agree to aſcribe it to the ſame perſon he had in his eye, it might be ſuch a juſtification of the truth of the character, as very few modern dedications can boaſt of.

This invention I challenge as wholly my own; and do hereby allow and recommend the uſe of it to all future authors, hoping it will change the faſhion among writers of character and ſelf-eſteem, from uſing no dedications at all, to forming them upno a plan entirely new. Let them each keep his patron in his eye, draw his character as exactly and graphically as poſſible, and publiſh it without a name, or with this inſcription *Detur digniſſimo:*

then if the world do univerſally aſcribe it to the perſon intended, let his name be prefixed to the ſecond edition; and it will be more true, and ſterling, and acceptable praiſe, than any hitherto found in that claſs of panegyrics. But if, on the contrary, the world ſhall aſcribe it to a different perſon, let the author acquieſce in that determination, rejoice in ſo good an expedient for preventing a blunder, and make his court to his new patron, who will hardly refuſe to admit him after ſo refined and delicate a compliment. I dare not recommend any thing like this method, with reſpect to the books already printed, becauſe it would occaſion ſo violent a controverſy about the propriety of many dedications, as could not be ended but by the ſword; they being moſt of them addreſſed to great men, who having agreed upon this method of revenging groſs affronts, and terminating in the laſt reſort, all important diſputes. Should any aſk, why I have not followed my own rule, by now prefixing the name of my patron? They are to underſtand, that, for reaſons known to myſelf, I intend to defer it till the nineteenth or twentieth edition.

If any ſhall think fit to blame me, for writing in ſo bold and aſſuming a way, through the whole of my book, I anſwer, I have choſen it on purpoſe, as being the lateſt and moſt modern way of writing; and the ſucceſs it has already met with, is a demonſtration of its propriety and beauty. The ſame thing alſo, to my great ſatisfaction, is a proof of the juſtice of a late author's ſcheme of Moral Philoſophy, who has expelled *mortification*, *ſelf-denial*, *humility*, and *ſilence*, from among the number of the

virtues, and transferred them, as he expreſſeth himſelf, to the oppoſite column; that is to ſay, the column of VICES. This ſcheme, I dare ſay, will ſtand its ground; and, as a critic, I obſerve, that it was probably the ſingle circumſtance juſt now mentioned, that brought upon the author an adverſary who, though poſſeſſed of many truly good qualities, had the misfortune to be always eminent for modeſty, and other baſtard virtues of the ſame claſs.

There are ſome, I find, of opinion, that it was neither neceſſary nor uſeful for me, to give ſo many examples of the conduct of the moderate, in the illuſtration of the ſeveral maxims; and theſe eminent perſons themſelves ſeem to feel ſome pain, from the expoſing of their virtues to the public view. But is it not an eſtabliſhed truth, that example teaches better than precept? Is there any thing more uſual in moral writings, than to illuſtrate them by extracts from the lives of the philoſophers, and other heroes, of ancient times? and ſince the advantage of example is commonly ſaid to be, that it is a living law, or that it puts life into the precept, ſurely the beſt of all examples muſt be thoſe of perſons really and literally alive: neither ſhould ſuch perſons themſelves be offended with this conduct; ſince, as has been hinted above, *mortification* and *ſelf-denial*, are no more to be reckoned among the *virtues*, but the *vices*.

However, I have the comfort to reflect, that from the oppoſite opinions of thoſe who have paſſed their judgment on this performance, I am in the middle, and conſequently in the right; for there

have been tranſmitted to me many noble inſtances of *moderation*, in expectation, no doubt, that they ſhould be added to my collection. I thankfully acknowledge my obligations to theſe kind contributors, but cannot make any uſe of their contributions at preſent; for it would, at leaſt, double the bulk of the treatiſe, and thereby render it *leſs commodious for pocket-carriage*. Further, I do aſſure them, it was not through want of materials that a greater number of examples was not produced, but from having duly weighed the proper proportion for a work of this extent: and to what hath been affixed with ſo much deliberation, I am reſolved ſtedfaſtly to adhere.

It were indeed to be wiſhed, that every man was left to himſelf, and allowed, in peace and quietneſs to finiſh his own work his own way; for I have ſeldom obſerved theſe things called *hints and ſuggeſtions*, to have any other effect than to perplex and miſlead. An author's ſituation, when perſecuted with them, ſeems to me to reſemble that of a gentleman building a houſe, or planning out a garden, who, if he hearkens to the advice, or attempts to gratify the taſte of every viſitor, will, in all probability, produce, upon the whole, a collection of inconſiſtencies, a ſyſtem of deformity.

I am very ſorry to be obliged thus to ſpeak in obſcurity, by returning a public anſwer to private obſervations; but cannot omit taking notice, that it has been much wondered at, that a certain very eminent perſon has been loſt in the crowd of heroes without any particular or diſtinguiſhing compliment paid to himſelf. Now, this did not by any means

flow from a want of reſpect and eſteem, but from a diſtruſt of my own abilities, and a deſpair of being able to do juſtice to ſo illuſtrious a character. Neither indeed was there any great neceſſity (excepting mere compliment) of ſpreading his fame, which hath already gone both far and wide. Beſides, that his many and remarkable exploits, however ſtrong and *pregnant* proofs they may be of benevolence and ſocial affection, have ſome circumſtances attending them, which render them more proper ſubjects of diſcourſe than writing. The glare would be rather too great for even the ſtrong eye-ſight of this generation to endure, when brought very near them. The ſun is the moſt glorious of all objects in the firmament; and yet, though it were in the power of a painter to draw him in all his luſtre, there would hardly be found a proper place for him in the largeſt palace in Great Britain.

The only other objection I ſhall take notice of is, that in one reſpect, I may be ſaid to have drawn the picture larger than the life, in as much as I ſeem to ſuppoſe, that all moderate men do, in fact, poſſeſs every one of the virtues which I have made to enter into the perfection of the character. This objection, though the one moſt inſiſted upon, is evidently both falſe and fooliſh. No reader of true diſcernment can imagine any ſuch thing. If it were ſo, there would be no occaſion for my book at all: on the contrary, the various maxims inſerted in it, and the various examples produced in illuſtration of them, do ſhew, that there are different degrees of perfection, even amongſt the moderate themſelves. They are a body, every member of which has neither the ſame abilities, nor the ſame

office. They are also a body most firmly united, for mutual defence and support: so much, I confess, I intended to intimate; and that, on this account, they are intitled to a sort of community of goods, and mutual participation of each other's excellencies. A head may very well boast of the beauty, elegance and activity of the hands, or the comely proportion and strength of the limbs belonging to it: and yet, though they are one body, it would be ridiculous to suppose, that the head or hands are always in the dirt, when they have the feet to carry them through it.

This metaphor of a body, however common, is one of the justest and most significative imaginable, out of which a very long allegory might be formed; but I shall prosecute it no farther at this time, except to acknowledge, that it convinces me of one real omission in my plan, viz. that what hath been just now hinted, I ought to have inserted as a *thirteenth maxim*, and illustrated it at large *. It would have been easy to shew, that the moderate are remarkable for the most perfect union and harmony, and for a firm and stedfast adherence to each other, in the prosecution of their designs. Neither is there any instance in which there is a stronger contrast or opposition between them and the orthodox; as manifestly appeared from the conduct of both parties in the General Assembly 1753. A friend of ours called the enemy, upon that occasion, *a parcel of conscientious fools*: had he then read the following maxims, which prove, that they have as little *conscience* as *wisdom*, it is probable he would have bestowed on them their *true* and proper character.

* This was done in the third edition.

# ECCLESIASTICAL CHARACTERISTICS.

## *INTRODUCTION.*

THE reader will doubtleſs agree with me, that moderation is an excellent thing, and particularly the nobleſt character of a church-man. It is alſo well known, that as all churches have uſually in them a moderate, and a zealous, high-flying, wild party; ſo our church hath at preſent a certain party, who glory in, and fight for moderation; and who (it is to be hoped juſtly) appropriate to themſelves wholly the character of moderate men: neither is it a ſmall preſage of a glorious and bleſſed ſtate of the church, in its approaching periods, that ſo many of our young men are ſmitten with the love of moderation, and generally burn with deſire to appear in that noble and divine character.

This hath inſpired me with the ambition and expectation of being helpful in training up as many as are deſirous of it, in this moſt uſeful of all ſciences. For however perfectly it is known, and however ſteadily practiſed by many who are adepts; and notwithſtanding there are ſome young men, of pregnant parts, who make a ſudden and ſurpriſing proficiency, without much aſſiſtance; yet I have

often obſerved, that there are ſeveral perſons, who err, in many inſtances, from the right path, boggle at ſundry particular ſteps of their leaders, and take a long time before they are thoroughly confirmed in their principles and practice. The ſame perſons alſo, by an unſtable conduct, or by an imprudent or unſeaſonable diſcovery of their deſigns, have brought a reproach upon their party, and been an obſtruction to whatever work they had then in hand.

Theſe bad effects, I humbly conceive, flow chiefly, if not only, from the want of a complete ſyſtem of moderation, containing all the principles of it, and giving a diſtinct view of their mutual influence one upon another, as well as proving their reaſonableneſs, and ſhewing, by examples, how they ought to be put in practice.

There is no work of this kind, to my knowledge, yet extant, which renders my preſent undertaking of it the more laudable, and will, I hope, render it the more acceptable.

I muſt inform the reader, that after I was fully convinced of the neceſſity of ſome ſuch piece as what follows, but before I entered upon it myſelf, I earneſtly intreated ſeveral of the moſt eminent men of the moderate ſtamp among us, thoſe burning and ſhining lights of our church, who are, and are eſteemed to be, our leaders, that ſome of them would ſet about it. However, they all devolved it upon me; and made this ſatisfying excuſe for themſelves, that they were ſo buſied in acting moderation, that they could not have time to write upon it. This ſoon led me to think, what would

become of many noble deſigns, and what advantage our diſcontented zealots might take, if any of the expert ſteerſmen of this eccleſiaſtical veſſel of ours ſhould retire from the helm but ſo long time as would be neceſſary to bring a work of ſuch a nature, to the perfection in ſtrength, ſymetry, and elegance, that the reader will perceive even this of mine is arrived at.

I ſhall now proceed to the principal part of the work, after I have informed the reader of the plan of it; which is briefly this, to enumerate diſtinctly, and in their proper order and connection, all the ſeveral maxims upon which moderate men conduct themſelves: and foraſmuch as the juſtice of many of them, being refined pieces of policy, is not very evident at firſt ſight, I ſhall ſubjoin to each an illuſtration and confirmation of it, from reaſon or experience, or both. N. B. I ſhall make but very little uſe of Scripture, becauſe that is contrary to ſome of the maxims themſelves; as will be ſeen in the ſequel.

## MAXIM I.

*All eccleſiaſtical perſons, of whatever rank, whether principals of colleges, profeſſors of divinity, miniſters, or even probationers, that are ſuſpected of hereſy, are to be eſteemed men of great genius, vaſt learning, and uncommon worth; and are, by all means, to be ſupported and protected.*

ALL moderate men have a kind of fellow-feeling with hereſy, and as ſoon as they hear of any one ſuſpected, or in danger of being proſecuted for it,

zealouſly and unanimouſly riſe up in his defence. This fact is unqueſtionable. I never knew a moderate man in my life, that did not love and honour a heretic, or that had not an implacable hatred at the perſons and characters of hereſy-hunters; a name with which we have thought proper to ſtigmatize theſe ſons of Belial, who begin and carry on proſecutions againſt men for hereſy in church-courts.

It is related of the apoſtle John, and an ugly ſtory it is, that upon going into a public bath, and obſerving the heretic Cerinthus there before him, he retired with the utmoſt precipitation, leſt the edifice ſhould fall, and cruſh him, when in company with ſuch an enemy of the truth. If the ſtory be true, the apoſtle's conduct was ridiculous and wild; but Dr Middleton has ſhewn, that the ſtory is not true; and indeed, the known benevolence and charity of John's writings make it highly improbable. However, not to enter into that controverſy, whether it be true or not, the conduct of all moderate men is directly oppoſite.

As to the juſtice of this maxim, many ſolid reaſons may be given for it.—Compaſſion itſelf, which is one of the fineſt and moſt benevolent feelings of the human heart, moves them to the relief of their diſtreſſed brother.—Another very plain reaſon may be given for it; moderate men are, by their very name and conſtitution, the reverſe, in all reſpects, of bigotted zealots. Now, it is well known, that many of this laſt ſort, both clergy and common people when they hear of a man ſuſpected of hereſy, conceive an averſion at him, even before they know any thing of the caſe; nor after he is acquitted (as they

are all of them commonly in our church-courts) can they ever come to entertain a favourable opinion of him. The reverſe of this then is, to be as early and as vigorous in his defence, as they are in his proſecution, and as implicit in our belief of his orthodoxy, as they are in their belief of his error.

I remember, when I was diſcourſing once to this purpoſe, a certain raw unexperienced perſon ſaid, he had always thought, that not moderation, but lukewarmneſs and indifference to truth, was the reverſe of exceſſive zeal; and that moderation was ſituated in the middle betwixt the two. To whom I anſwered, Young man, you do not reflect, that no fierce man can be reſiſted but by one as fierce, nor overcome but by one fiercer than himſelf; if, therefore, no body would oppoſe the zealots, but ſuch calm midſmen as you mention, in every ſuch inſtance the balance of power muſt lean to their ſide, and the poor heretic muſt fall a ſacrifice, to the no ſmall detriment of the cauſe of moderation; which by the bye, is commonly ſupported by the heretics in their ſtations, and therefore they deſerve a grateful return.

This brings to my mind another reaſon for the maxim, viz. That heretics being ſo nearly related to the moderate men, have a right to claim their protection out of friendſhip and perſonal regard. This ſerves a very noble end; for it vindicates the Chriſtian religion from the objection of ſome infidels, who affirm, that it does not recommend private friendſhip; now moderate men having all a very great regard to private friendſhip, and perſonal con-

nections, do by their practice, which is the most solid way, confute this slander.

I may add to these another argument for the great character of heretics, as asserted in the maxim, which I picked up from the preaching of a seceding minister. He told his hearers, that when the devil looks out for an instrument to propagate error, he never makes choice of a weak silly man, but one able and learned; as well knowing, I suppose, that though God can support his cause by any instrument whatever, yet he needs always the best and most sufficient he can get. Now, though I hope no man will reckon me of this fanatic's principles, so far as to think the devil the source of error; yet the citation serves my purpose, as it shews that he himself was convinced of the ability and learning of heretics; and all the world knows, that the testimony of an enemy is the strongest of all evidences upon a man's side.

I shall conclude this maxim with observing, that such tenderness for heretics, however due from some, is yet, in many of the moderate character, an instance of the most heroic and generous friendship. It is quite disinterested, as they themselves run not the smallest hazard of ever being in the like circumstances. Heretics are commonly an honest sort of people, but with all their book learning, of no great stock of prudence or policy. They publish and assert whatever they believe upon all points, without considering the reception it is like to meet with, from those of opposite principles. They affront the public to its face, which Lord Shaftesbury tells us ought not to be done. On the other hand, men

thorough-paced in moderation, discover their principles only at such times, and to such persons, as are able to bear them. By this means they preserve themselves from heresy; and indeed they cannot possibly fall into it unless by mistake; in which case, as soon as they are challenged, (if it is like to be attended with any temporal inconveniency) they deny it, explain it away, or repent, and ask pardon.

In all this they follow the noble example of Mr. —— who in the assembly debates upon Professor Simson's affair, happening to say something that was challenged by one present as heresy, immediately replied, "Moderator, if that be heresy, I renounce it."

## MAXIM II.

*When any man is charged with loose practices, or tendencies to immorality, he is to be screened and protected as much as possible; especially if the faults laid to his charge be, as they are incomparably well termed in a sermon, preached by a hopeful youth that made some noise lately, "good humoured vices."*

THE reason upon which this maxim is founded, may be taken from the reasons of the former *mutatis mutandis*; there being scarcely any of them that does not hold equally in both cases. A libertine is a kind of practical heretic, and is to be treated as such. Dr Tillotson observes in one of his sermons, that the worst of all heresies is a bad life; now, if instead of worst, which is an uncomely expression, you would read greatest, in that passage, then a libertine is the greatest of all heretics, and to be honoured

in proportion. Even the apoſtle Paul (who is very ſeldom of any uſe to us in our reaſonings) ſeems to ſuppoſe, that they are men of moſt knowledge who are moſt free and bold in their practice; and that they are only weak brethren, who are filled with ſcruples. The weak man is reſtrained and confirmed by his narrow conſcience: but the ſtrong man believeth that he may EAT, and, by parity of reaſon, DRINK all things.

In order to underſtand the nature of "good-humoured vices," the reader may pleaſe to take notice, that it is an obſervation of Lord Shafteſbury, that "the beſt time for thinking upon religious ſubjects, is when a man is merry, and in good humour:" and ſo far is this obſervation drawn from nature, that it is the time commonly choſen for that purpoſe, by many who never heard of his lordſhip, or his writings. Whatever therefore, ſerves to promote merriment, and heighten good humour, muſt ſo far ſerve for the diſcovery of religious truth. But as there are many ways of making a perſon merry, which narrow-minded people will call vice; from thence, in compliance with common language, ariſes the new compound "good-humoured vices." It is not, however ſo to be underſtood, as if either the inventor of it, or thoſe who love and patronize him, mean any thing by it but what is, "in their apprehenſion," both innocent and laudable.

Let it alſo be obſerved, that as gravity is almoſt a neceſſary conſequence of ſolitude, "good-humoured vices" are certainly "ſocial pleaſures," and ſuch as flow from, and ſhew benevolence; and this is an affection for which our whole fraternity have the

higheſt regard, inſomuch that no ſurer mark can be taken of a man's being ONE OF US, than the frequent returns of this expreſſion in his diſcourſes or writings.

It will ſerve further for the ſupport of this maxim, that according to modern diſcoveries, there is a great analogy between the "moral virtues," or if you will, the "ſcience of morals," and the "fine arts:" and it is on account of this analogy, that moſt of the preſent reigning expreſſions upon the ſubject of morals, are borrowed from the arts, as "beauty, order, proportion, harmony, decency," &c. It is alſo eſtabliſhed long ſince, and well known as a principle in the fine arts, that a certain freedom and boldneſs of manner, is what chiefly conſtitutes grace and beauty. Why then ſhould not approbation be founded upon the ſame grounds in both caſes? Why then ſhould not a bold practice be as beautiful and real, as a bold hand is in imitated life? eſpecially as all great geniuſes have actually laid claim to this as their peculiar privilege, not to be confined to common forms; and that in oppoſition to the bulk of mankind, who through want of taſte, are not able to reliſh the fineſt performances in any of the kinds.

I muſt not, however, omit taking notice, to prevent miſtakes, of one exception that muſt be made from this maxim; that is, that when the perſon to whoſe charge any faults are laid, is reputed orthodox in his principles, in the common acceptation of that word, or comes in by orthodox influence, in that caſe they are all to be taken for granted as true, and the evil of them ſet forth in the livelieſt colours. In conſequence of this, he is to be pro-

ſecuted and torn to pieces on account of theſe crimes. But if it ſo happen, that he cannot be convicted upon a trial, then it is beſt to make uſe of things as they really are; that is, to expreſs ſuſpicions, to give ingenious and dubious hints, and if poſſible, ruin him without any trial at all. There was a noble example of this given a few years ago, in the caſe of a ſettlement in the bounds of a preſbytery, very many of whom are eminent in moderation. In that caſe, there were ſeveral faults laid to the charge of the candidate: and yet, though he himſelf very much inſiſted upon an inquiry into their truth, and a judgment upon their relevancy, the preſbytery wiſely refuſed to do either the one or the other, but left them to have their own natural weight in fame, rumour, and converſation.

The neceſſity of this exception is very evident: for, in the ſuppoſed caſe, all the reaſons for protection to the young man fail; to ſatisfy himſelf of which, let the reader view theſe reaſons, as they are annexed to the firſt maxim, and ſave my book from the deformity of repetition.

## MAXIM III.

*It is a neceſſary part of the character of a moderate man never to ſpeak of the Confeſſion of Faith but with a ſneer; to give ſly hints, that he does not thoroughly believe it: and to make the word* orthodoxy *a term of contempt and reproach.*

THE Confeſſion of Faith, which we are now all laid under a diſagreeable neceſſity to ſubſcribe, was framed in times of hot religious zeal; and therefore it can hardly be ſuppoſed to contain any thing

agreeable to our ſentiments in theſe cool and refreſhing days of moderation. So true is this, that I do not remember to have heard any moderate man ſpeak well of it, or recommend it, in a ſermon, or private diſcourſe, in my time. And, indeed, nothing can be more ridiculous, than to make a fixed ſtandard for opinions, which change juſt as the faſhions of clothes and dreſs. No complete ſyſtem can be ſettled for all ages, except the maxims I am now compiling and illuſtrating, and their great perfection lies in their being ambulatory, ſo that they may be applied differently, with the change of times.

Upon this head ſome may be ready to object, That if the Confeſſion of Faith be built upon the ſacred Scriptures, then, change what will, it cannot, as the foundation upon which it reſts, remains always firm and the ſame. In anſwer to this, I beg leave to make a very new, and therefore ſtriking compariſon: When a lady looks at a mirror, ſhe ſees herſelf in a certain attitude and dreſs, but in her native beauty and colour; ſhould her eye, on a ſudden, be tinctured with the jaundice, ſhe ſees herſelf all yellow and ſpotted; yet the mirror remains the ſame faithful mirror ſtill, and the alteration does not ariſe from it, but from the object that looks at it. I beg leave to make another compariſon: When an old philoſopher looked at an evening-ſtar, he beheld nothing but a little twinkling orb, round and regular like the reſt; but when a modern views it with a teleſcope, he talks of phaſes, and horns, and mountains, and what not; and this ariſes not from any alteration in the ſtar, but from his ſuperior aſſiſ-

tance in looking at it. The application of both theſe ſimilitudes I leave to the reader.

But beſides theſe general reaſons, there is one very ſtrong particular reaſon why moderate men cannot love the Confeſſion of Faith; moderation ſimply implies a large ſhare of charity, and conſequently a favourable opinion of thoſe that differ from our church; but a rigid adherence to the Confeſſion of Faith, and high eſteem of it, nearly borders upon, or gives great ſuſpicion of harſh opinions of thoſe that differ from us: and does not experience riſe up and ratify this obſervation? Who are the narrow-minded, bigotted, uncharitable perſons among us? Who are the ſevere cenſurers of thoſe that differ in judgment? Who are the damners of the adorable Heathens, Socrates, Plato, Marcus Antoninus, &c.? In fine, who are the perſecutors of the inimitable heretics among ourſelves? Who but the admirers of this antiquated compoſition, who pin their faith to other men's ſleeves, and will not endure one jot leſs or different belief from what their fathers had before them! It is therefore plain, that the moderate man, who deſires to incloſe all intelligent beings in one benevolent embrace, muſt have an utter abhorrence at that vile hedge of diſtinction, the Confeſſion of Faith.

I ſhall briefly mention a trifling objection to this part of our character.—That by our ſubſcription we ſacrifice ſincerity, the queen of virtues, to private gain and advantage. To which I anſwer, in the firſt place, That the objection proves too much, and therefore muſt be falſe, and can prove nothing: for, allowing the juſtice of the objection, it would follow, that a vaſt number, perhaps a majority, of the

clergy of the church of England are villains; their printed ſermons being, many of them, diametrically oppoſite to the articles which they ſubſcribe. Now, as this ſuppoſition can never be admitted by any charitable man, the objection from whence it flows, as a neceſſary conſequence, muſt fall to the ground.

But further, what is there more inſincere in our ſubſcriptions, than in thoſe expreſſions of compliment and civility, which all acknowledge lawful, although they rarely expreſs the meaning of the heart! The deſign is ſufficiently underſtood in both caſes; and our ſubſcriptions have this advantage above forms of compliment, in point of honeſty, that we are at a great deal of pains uſually to perſuade the world that we do not believe what we ſign; whereas the complaiſant gentleman is very ſeldom at any pains about the matter.

What is ſaid might ſuffice in ſo clear a caſe; but I am here able to give a proof of the improvement of the age, by communicating to the reader a new way of ſubſcribing the Confeſſion of Faith, in a perfect conſiſtency with ſincerity, if that be thought of any conſequence: it is taken from the method of atteſting ſome of our gentlemen elders to the general aſſembly. Many inſiſt, that they ought to be atteſted, and do atteſt them, as qualified in all reſpects, if the atteſtors are wholly ignorant about the matter; becauſe, in that caſe, there is no evidence to the contrary, and the preſumption ought to lie on the favourable ſide. Now, as every new diſcovery ſhould be applied to all the purpoſes for which it may be uſeful, let this method be adopted by the entrants into the miniſtry, and applied to their ſub-

ſcription of the Confeſſion of Faith. Nothing is more eaſy than for them to keep themſelves wholly ignorant of what it contains; and then they may, with a good conſcience, ſubſcribe it as true, becauſe it ought to be ſo.

## MAXIM IV.

*A good preacher muſt not only have all the above and ſubſequent principles of moderation in him, as the ſource of every thing that is good; but muſt, over and above, have the following ſpecial marks and ſigns of a talent for preaching.* 1. *His ſubjects muſt be confined to ſocial duties.* 2. *He muſt recommend them only from rational conſiderations, viz. the beauty and comely proportions of virtue, and its advantages in the preſent life, without any regard to a future ſtate of more extended ſelf-intereſt.* 3. *His authorities muſt be drawn from heathen writers,* none, *or as few as poſſible, from Scripture.* 4. *He muſt be very unacceptable to the common people.*

THESE four marks of a good preacher, or rules for preaching well (for they ſerve equally for both purpoſes) I ſhall endeavour diſtinctly to illuſtrate and confirm, that this important branch of my ſubject may be fully underſtood.

As to the firſt of theſe rules, That a preacher's ſubjects muſt be confined to "ſocial duties," it is quite neceſſary in a moderate man, becauſe his moderation teaches him to avoid all the high flights of evangelic enthuſiaſm, and the myſteries of grace, which the common people are ſo fond of. It may be obſerved, nay, it is obſerved, that all of our ſtamp

avoid the word *grace* as much as poſſible, and have agreed to ſubſtitute the "moral virtues," in the room of the "graces of the Spirit," which is the orthodox expreſſion. And indeed it is not in this only, but in all other caſes, that we endeavour to improve the phraſeology, and ſhew, that beſides ſentiment, even in language itſelf, we are far ſuperior to, and wiſer than our fathers before us. I could ſhew this by a great many examples, but that it would be too tedious; and therefore only add, to the one mentioned above, that where an ancient orthodox man, or even an old faſhioned modern, that thinks religion can never be amended, either in matter or manner, would have ſaid "a great degree of ſanctification," a man of moderation and politeneſs will ſay, "a high pitch of virtue." Now, as this is the caſe, it is plain, a moderate preacher muſt confine his ſubjects to ſocial duties chiefly, and not inſiſt on ſuch paſſages of Scripture as will by the very repetition of them, contaminate his ſtyle, and may perhaps diffuſe a rank ſmell of orthodoxy through the whole of his diſcourſe.

After all, I cannot refuſe, that it is ſtill a more excellent way, for thoſe who have talents equal to the undertaking, to ſeize an orthodox text, explain it quite away from its ordinary ſenſe, and conſtrain it to ſpeak the main parts of our own ſcheme. Thus a noble champion of ours choſe once for his ſubject, Rom. viii. 2. "For the law of the Spirit of life, in Chriſt Jeſus, hath made me free from the law of ſin and death:" which he explained in this manner; "the law of the Spirit of life," that is, the moral ſenſe; "in Chriſt Jeſus," which is

the ſum of the Chriſtian religion, &c. The advantage of this way is, that it is tearing the weapons out of the hands of the orthodox, and turning them againſt themſelves. And it may perhaps, in time, have the effect to make our hearers affix our ſenſe to their beloved Scriptures; or at leaſt, which is the next thing, prevent them from being able to find any other.—However, I muſt acknowledge, that this way of doing is not for every man's management; and therefore I continue my advice to the generality, ſtill to adhere to the rule as firſt delivered.

The ſecond rule will be eaſily confirmed, That duties are to be recommended only from "rational conſiderations." What can be imagined more fooliſh than to contradict this? If there be any thing in a ſermon different from rational conſiderations, it muſt be irrational, that is to ſay, abſurd. It is in this part of our ſcheme that we moderate men obtain a glorious triumph over our adverſaries and deſpiſers. Who but muſt ſmile, when they hear the contemptible, vulgar, ignorant, hot-headed country elders, or ſilly women, led captive by them at their will, ſaying, they do not love this rational way of going to heaven!

But to explain this method a little further, the rational way of preaching is ſometimes ſet in oppoſition to the pathetic way of raiſing the paſſions. This laſt is what we greatly diſapprove of; there is ſomething immoderate in the very idea of raiſing the paſſions; and therefore it is contrary to our character: nor was it ever known that a truly moderate man raiſed or moved any affection in his hearers,

unleſs perhaps the affection of anger againſt himſelf. We leave that to your vehement bawlers, or your whining lamenters, that are continually telling, "they will ſpend and be ſpent," for the ſalvation of their hearers, which Lord Shafteſbury elegantly derides, by calling it "the heroic paſſion of ſaving ſouls." And let any unprejudiced perſon judge, whether there is not ſomething vaſtly great, ſomething like an heroic fortitude in that man, that can talk of future judgment, heaven and hell, with as much coolneſs and indifference as if it were a common matter. To ſay the truth, indeed, we do not often meddle with theſe alarming themes. However, as I obſerved upon the firſt mark of a good preacher, that it is glorious to rob the orthodox of a text, and make it bend to our plan; ſo it is alſo an uncommon excellence to treat theſe ſubjects with calmneſs, and to prove that we ought to do ſo. Thus a great proficient in our way, lately preaching upon Acts xxiv. 25. where Paul made Felix to tremble by his diſcourſe, proved from it, that miniſters ought not to raiſe the paſſions of their hearers. An ignorant obſerver would have thought that the paſſion of terror was raiſed in Felix to a great degree, and that he was little better than a Cambuſlang convict. But mark the lucky expreſſion our hero got hold of: "As he reaſoned of righteouſneſs," &c.; as he reaſoned, that is, argued, and proved by rational conſiderations.

This example gives me a fine opportunity of making a kind of contraſt, and ſhewing from fact, the difference between an orthodox and a moderate preacher. I myſelf heard one of the firſt kind, up-

on the text just now mentioned; and his first observation was, that the apostle Paul was a faithful "reprover;" speaking home to Felix, 1. Of "righteousness;" to convince him of any iniquity he had been guilty of in his government. 2. Of "temperance;" which he said should be translated "continence," and was probably intended as a reproof to him and Drusilla, who were living in adultery. His next, and main observation was, that Felix was "convicted," but "stifled," his convictions, and delayed his repentance, saying, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Then followed a great deal of stuff, which I do not incline to transcribe; but it was just what the vulgar call experimental preaching, I suppose to distinguish it from rational.

But how contrary to this did our moderate friend? He first observed, that St. Paul was a "moral," or a "legal preacher;" discoursing of "righteousness," and "temperance," without a word of "faith:" and then, that he was a "reasoning preacher," that did not strive to raise people's passions, but informed their judgment. I was indeed a little disappointed upon consulting the original, to find that the word used, which is διαλεγομενου, signifies only "continuing his discourse," and so might be either in the "reasoning," or "pathetic" way; but I was satisfied by reflecting, that the word evidently includes both; and so "reasoning" being the best, it is to be supposed the apostle preferred it.

Agreeably to this rule, Lord Shaftesbury, and after him a bright luminary in our own church, gives an advice to all moderate clergymen, not to

affect that idle title of "ambaſſadors," or "plenipotentiaries from heaven," ſo fondly claimed by zealots, and I take the liberty to ſuppoſe, that the reaſon of the advice was the ſame in both, *viz.* "That under this character zealots put on an air of authority, and deliver their meſſage with pathos to which they would otherwiſe have been ſtrangers." His lordſhip indeed explodes the conceit ſufficiently; he aſks, "Gentlemen, where is your commiſſion? how has it been conveyed? where are the letters patent? where the credentials?" with many more queſtions, eaſier for his lordſhip to aſk, than for SOME PERSONS to anſwer.

The third rule, viz. recommending "virtue," from the authority and examples of the Heathens, is not only highly proper, becauſe they were very virtuous, but hath this manifeſt advantage attending it, that it is a proper way of reaſoning to two quite oppoſite kinds of perſons. One is, ſuch as are real Chriſtians, who will be aſhamed by the ſuperior excellence of mere heathens, as they call them, and whom they ſo much deſpiſe. The other is, our preſent living heathens, who pay no regard to the Chriſtian religion at all; and therefore will only be moved by the authority of the perſons they eſteem. It is well known, there are multitudes in our iſland, who reckon Socrates and Plato to have been much greater men than any of the apoſtles, although, (as the moderate preacher I mentioned lately told his hearers) the apoſtle Paul had an univerſity education, and was inſtructed in logic by profeſſor Gamaliel. Therefore let religion be conſtantly and uniformly called "virtue," and let the Heathen philoſophers be ſet up as

great patterns and promoters of it. Upon this head muſt particularly recommend M. Antoninus by name, becauſe an eminent perſon of the moderate character ſays, his meditations is the BEST book that ever was written for forming the heart.

But perhaps the laſt part of this third rule will be thought to need moſt illuſtration and defence, viz. That none at all, "or very little uſe is to be made of Scripture." And really, to deal plainly, the great reaſon of this is, that very few of the Scripture motives and arguments are of the moderate ſtamp; the moſt part of them are drawn from orthodox principles: for example, the apoſtle Paul cannot even ſay, "Huſbands, love your wives," but his argument and example comes in theſe words, "as Chriſt alſo loved the church." The apoſtle John alſo ſpeaks in a very myſterious way of union with Chriſt, and abiding in him, in order to bring forth fruit, which is his way of ſpeaking for a virtuous life. Now, let any indifferent perſon judge, how this kind of expreſſion, and others of a like nature, ſuch as mortifying the deeds of the body through the Spirit, would agree with the other parts of our diſcourſes: they would be like oppoſite kinds of fluids which will not compound; they would be quite heterogeneous, which is againſt all the rules of fine writing, and hinders it from being an uniform, beautiful, and comely whole. Horace, in his Art of Poetry, gives this as his very firſt obſervation,

"Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam
"Jungere ſi velit"————————

Which my learned reader cannot fail both to remember and underſtand, and which I deſire him to apply to this ſubject we are now upon. If it be ſaid, that ſermons are not poems, and therefore not to be compoſed by the rules of poetry: I anſwer, it is a miſtake; many of our ſermons, eſpecially thoſe compoſed by the younger ſort among us, are poems; at leaſt they are full of poetical flights, which comes much to the ſame thing: not to mention that the rule agrees equally to proſe and poetry. How often have I heard parts of Mr Addiſon's Cato, Young's Night Thoughts, and divers other poems, in ſermons? and to ſay the truth, they were none of the worſt parts of them. However, I would offer my advice, as that of a perſon of ſome experience, to all young preachers, not to do Dr Young the honour of borrowing any thing from him again, becauſe he is a ſnarling, ſullen, gloomy, melancholy mortal, cites a great deal of Scripture; and particularly, becauſe he has given a vile ſneer at the practice I am juſt now recommending, in the following two lines of his Univerſal Paſſion.

> When doctors Scripture for the claſſics quit,
> Polite apoſtates from God's grace to wit.

I have only another advice to give upon this head, and that is, That when young preachers think proper to borrow from modern printed poems, they would be pleaſed to tranſpoſe them a little, ſo to ſpeak, that they may not be too eaſily diſcerned by young gentlemen who read the magazines. However, I am in great hopes we ſhall ſhortly be quite above the neceſſity of borrowing from any body, in

order to make our ſermons poetry: there are ſome perſons of genius among us, that can make very good poetry of their own; of which I could produce ſome recent inſtances; but I do not think it at preſent expedient.

The fourth and laſt rule for a preacher, is, that he muſt "be very unacceptable to the people." The Spectator, I remember, ſome where ſays, that moſt of the critics in Great Britain ſeem to act as if the firſt rule of dramatic writing were "not to pleaſe." Now, what they make the firſt rule of writing plays, I make the laſt rule for compoſing ſermons; not as being the leaſt, but the moſt important. It is indeed the grand criterion, the moſt indiſpenſable rule of all. Though one ſhould pretend to adhere to all the former rules, and be wanting in this alone, he would be no more than "a ſounding braſs, or a tinkling cymbal;" pardon the expreſſion, the importance of the matter requireth it. I ſhall put a caſe: ſuppoſe a man ſhould have the approbation of the very beſt judges, viz. Thoſe whoſe taſte we ourſelves allow to be good, if at the ſame time he happens to be acceptable to the common people, it is a ſign that he muſt have ſome ſubtile refined fault, which has eſcaped the obſervation of the good judges aforeſaid; for there is no man even of our own fraternity, ſo perfect and uniform in judging right, as the common people are in judging wrong.

I hope there is little need of aſſigning reaſons for this great characteriſtic of the art of preaching: I ſuppoſe it will be allowed to be, if not altogether, at leaſt next to ſelf-evident: all the ſeveral reaſons that have been given for the particular maxims of

moderation, concur in eſtabliſhing this; for the people are all declared enemies of moderation, in its principle and practice; and therefore if moderation be right, they muſt be wrong. There is a known ſtory of a Heathen orator, who, when the common people gave a ſhout of applauſe, during his pronouncing an oration, immediately turned about to a friend, and aſked him, what miſtake he had committed. Now if an audience of vulgar Heathens was allowed to be ſo infallibly wrong in their judgment, the ſame thing muſt hold, *a fortiori*, in an audience of vulgar Chriſtians.

From this it evidently follows, that a popular preacher eſſentially ſignifies a bad preacher; and it is always ſo underſtood by us, whenever we uſe the expreſſion. If we but hear it reported of any one, that he is very popular among the lower ſort, we are under no difficulty of giving his character, without having heard him preach ourſelves. In this caſe, fame is a certain guide to truth, by being inverted; for we deteſt and deſpiſe him, preciſely in the ſame proportion that the people admire him. On the other hand, the truly moderate man is not only above the applauſe of the multitude, but he glories in their hatred, and rejoices in himſelf, in proportion as he has been ſo happy as to provoke and diſoblige them. Of this I could give ſeveral notable examples, were it not that it muſt certainly offend their modeſty, not only to praiſe them in print, but even to publiſh their higheſt virtues.

But now, upon the whole, as a great critic obſerves, that there is ſometimes more beauty ſhewn in a compoſition, by receding from the rules

of art, when an important point is to be gained, than by ſtrictly adhering to them: ſo, all theſe rules notwithſtanding, it ſhall be allowable for any moderate man, upon an extraordinary emergency, to break them for a good end: as for inſtance, he may ſpeak even in Whitefield's ſtyle, when his ſettlement has the misfortune to depend upon the people; which I have known done with good ſucceſs. We are alſo well ſatisfied, that Mr. T——r of Norwich, and ſuch like firſt-rate writers, ſhould make pompous collections of Scripture-texts, as their truly laudable intention is, by altering Chriſtianity, to reconcile it to moderation and common ſenſe; and to find out a meaning to words which the writers of them, as living in the infancy of the church, had not diſcernment enough to intend.

To conclude this maxim, it would be too formal for me, and too tedious to the reader to enumerate all the objections that are, by ſome, raiſed againſt our way of preaching: I ſhall therefore mention but one, and ſhew it is falſe; hoping that the reader will ſuppoſe there is no more foundation for any of the reſt. It is alledged, there is no method in our diſcourſes, but that they conſiſt in random flights, and general declamations. Nothing more untrue. The polite reader, or hearer, knows that there may be an excellent and regular method, where there are no formal diſtinctions of firſtly, ſecondly, and thirdly; but, to cut off all occaſion of cavil, let the world hereby know, that one of our moſt famed preachers choſe once for his text, John xi. 29. and of that verſe the following words "He ſtinketh." He obſerved, we had there (or

thereabouts) a deſcription of the threefold ſtate of a bad man: firſt, he ſickened; ſecondly he died; thirdly, he ſtank. This I take to have been an accuracy in point of method, to which it will not be eaſy to find a parallel.

## MAXIM V.

*A miniſter muſt endeavour to acquire as great a degree of politeneſs, in his carriage and behaviour, and to catch as much of the air and manner of a fine gentleman, as poſſibly he can.*

THIS is uſually a diſtinguiſhing mark between the moderate and the orthodox; and how much we have the advantage in it is extremely obvious. Good manners is undoubtedly the moſt excellent of all accompliſhments, and in ſome meaſure ſupplies the place of them all when they are wanting. And ſurely nothing can be more neceſſary to, or more ornamental and becoming in a miniſter: it gains him eaſy acceſs into the world, and frees him from that rigid ſeverity which renders many of them ſo odious and deteſtable to the polite part of it. In former times, miniſters were ſo monkiſh and recluſe for ordinary, and ſo formal when they did happen to appear, that all the jovial part of mankind, particularly rakes and libertines, ſhunned and fled from them; or, when unavoidably thrown into their company, were conſtrained, and had no kind of confidence to repoſe in them; whereas now, let a moderate, modern, well-bred miniſter go into promiſcuous company, they ſtand in no manner of awe, and will even ſwear with all imaginable liberty. This gives

the miniſter an opportunity of underſtanding their character, and of perhaps ſometimes reaſoning in an eaſy and genteel manner againſt ſwearing. This, though indeed it ſeldom reforms them, yet it is as ſeldom taken amiſs; which ſhews the counſel to have been adminiſtered with prudence.

How is it poſſible that a miniſter can underſtand wickedneſs, unleſs he either practiſes it himſelf (but much of that will not yet paſs in the world) or allows the wicked to be bold in his preſence? To do otherwiſe, would be to do in practice what I have known narrow-minded bigotted ſtudents do as to ſpeculation, viz. avoid reading their adverſaries books becauſe they were erroneous; whereas it is evident no error can be refuted till it be underſtood.

The ſetting the different characters of miniſters in immediate oppoſition, will put this matter paſt all doubt, as the ſun of truth riſing upon the ſtars of error, darkens and makes them to diſappear. Some there are, who may be eaſily known to be miniſters, by their very dreſs, their grave demure looks, and their confined preciſe converſation. How contemptible is this! and how like to ſome of the meaneſt employments among us; as ſailors who are known by their rolling walk, and taylors by the ſhivering ſhrug of their ſhoulders! But our truly accompliſhed clergy put off ſo entirely every thing that is peculiar to their profeſſion, that were you to ſee them in the ſtreets, meet with them at a viſit, or ſpend an evening with them in a tavern, you would not once ſuſpect them for men of that character. Agreeably to this, I remember an excellent thing ſaid by a gen-

tleman, in commendation of a miniſter, "that he had nothing at all of the clergyman about him."

I ſhall have done with this maxim, when I have given my advice as to the method of attaining to it; which is, That ſtudents, probationers, and young clergymen, while their bodies and minds are yet flexible, ſhould converſe and keep company, as much as may be, with officers of the army under five and twenty, of whom there are no ſmall number in the nation, and with young gentlemen of fortune, particularly ſuch as, by the early and happy death of their parents, have come to their eſtates before they arrived at the years of majority. Scarce one of theſe but is a noble pattern to form upon; for they have had the opportunity of following nature, which is the all comprehenſive rule of the ancients, and of acquiring a free manner of thinking, ſpeaking, and acting, without either the pedantry of learning, or the ſtiffneſs contracted by a ſtrict adherence to the maxims of worldly prudence.

After all, I believe I might have ſpared myſelf the trouble of inſerting this maxim, the preſent riſing generation being of themſelves ſufficiently diſpoſed to obſerve it. This I reckon they have, either conſtitutionally, or perhaps have learned it from the inimitable Lord Shafteſbury, who, in ſo lively a manner ſets forth the evil of univerſities, and recommends converſation with the polite Peripatetics, as the only way of arriving at true knowledge.

## MAXIM VI.

*It is not only unneceſſary for a moderate man to have much learning, but he ought to be filled with a contempt of*

*all kinds of learning but one; which is to underſtand Leibnitz's ſcheme well; the chief parts of which are ſo beautifully painted, and ſo harmoniouſly ſung by Lord Shafteſbury, and which has been ſo well licked into form and method by the late immortal Mr H——n.*

THIS maxim is neceſſary, becauſe without it the former could not be attained to. Much ſtudy is a great enemy to politeneſs in men, juſt as a great care of houſehold affairs ſpoils the free careleſs air of a fine lady: and whether politeneſs is to be ſacrificed to learning, let the impartial world judge. Beſides the ſcheme which I have permitted the moderate man to ſtudy, doth actually ſuperſede the uſe of all other learning, becauſe it contains a knowledge of the whole, and the good of the whole; more than which, I hope, will be allowed to be not only needleſs, but impoſſible.

This ſcheme excels in brevity: for it may be underſtood in a very ſhort time; which, I ſuppoſe, prompted a certain clergyman to ſay, that any ſtudent might get as much divinity as he would ever have occaſion for in ſix weeks. It is alſo quite agreeable to the improvements that have been made in arts and ſciences of late years; for every thing is now more compendiouſly taught, and more ſuperficially underſtood than formerly, and yet as well and better to all the purpoſes of life. In the very mechanic arts, laborious diligence gives way to elegance and eaſe; as the lumpiſh, ſtrong, old Gothic buildings, to more genteel, though ſlighter, modern ones. There have been ſchemes publiſhed for teaching children to read by way of diverſion. Every year gives us

a ſhorter method of learning ſome branch of knowledge. In ſhort, in theſe laſt days the quinteſſence of every thing has been extracted, and is preſented us, as it were, in little phials; ſo that we may come to all learning by one act of intuition. Agreeably to all this, have we not ſeen in fact, many ſtudents of divinity brought up in hot-beds, who have become ſpeakers in general aſſemblies, and ſtrenuous ſupporters of a falling church, before their beards were grown, to the perfect aſtoniſhment of an obſerving world?

I muſt alſo obſerve, that there is a providential fitneſs of that ſcheme, in another reſpect, for the preſent age and time. When the fees of colleges and expence of boarding is raiſed; when the rate of living is quite altered, and, when a ſpiteful landed intereſt, and a heedleſs parliament, have refuſed to grant any augmentation to our ſtipends; there is no other way remains for us, but to cheapen our education, by taking leſs time to it, and arriving at the point deſigned by a nearer cut. Then there will be no need at all for the critical ſtudy of the Scriptures, for reading large bodies of divinity, for an acquaintance with church-hiſtory, or the writings of thoſe poor creatures the Chriſtian fathers: but all is abſorbed into the good of the whole; of which I may ſay ſeriouſly and ſoberly, what Dr. Tillotſon ſays ironically of tranſubſtantiation, that it is not only true, but it is all truth, and will not ſuffer any thing to be true but itſelf.

We find that moderate men have moſtly, by conſtitution, too much ſpirit to ſubmit to the drudgery

of the kinds of learning above-mentioned, and deſpiſe all who do ſo. There is no controverſy now about Arian, Arminian, Pelagian, or Socinian tenets, but only whether this good of the whole ſcheme holds. This ſhews, by the bye, the injuſtice and malignity of thoſe poor beings the Seceders, who cry out of erroneous doctrines in the church, and aſſert, that Arminianiſm is publicly taught by many. It is known, that they mean by the moderate men, when they ſpeak ſo; and yet I will venture to affirm, that there are not a few young men of that character, who, if they were aſked, could not tell what the five Arminian articles are, ſo little do they regard Arminianiſm. I myſelf, the reader will perceive, know the number of them; but whether I know any more about them or not, I ſhall preſerve as a ſecret in my own mind. It will perhaps be objected againſt this maxim, That the moderate party commonly ſet up on a pretence of being more learned than their adverſaries; and are, in fact thought to be very learned in their ſermons by the vulgar, who, for that reaſon hate them. Now, as to their pretending to be more learned than their adverſaries, it is moſt juſt; for they have, as has been ſhewn, got hold of the ſum-total of learning, although they did not calculate it themſelves. And as to their being thought learned in their ſermons by the vulgar, it is ſufficient for that purpoſe that they be unintelligible. Scattering a few phraſes in their ſermons, as harmony, order, proportion, taſte, ſenſe of beauty, balance of the affections, &c. will eaſily perſuade the people that they are learned: and this perſuaſion is, to all intents and purpoſes,

the ſame thing as if it were true. It is one of thoſe deceitful feelings which Mr. H—, in his Eſſays, has ſhewn to be ſo beautiful and uſeful. Theſe phraſes they may eaſily get in books not above the ſize of an octavo; and if they incline to be very deep, they may get abundance of citations from the ancient Heathen authors in Cudworth's Intellectual Syſtem, and moſtly tranſlated to their hand.

I ſhall now ſubjoin a ſhort catalogue of the moſt neceſſary and uſeful books, the thorough underſtanding of which will make a truly learned moderate man: Leibnitz's Theodicee, and his letters, Shafteſbury's Characteriſtics, Collins's Inquiry into Human Liberty, all Mr. H——n's pieces, Chriſtianity as old as the Creation, D—n's Beſt Scheme, and H—'s Moral Eſſays*. The two laſt are Scots

* It hath been ſuggeſted to me, that another author of our own country ought to have been added to the above catalogue; but I judged it improper, for two reaſons. One is, that I do not find that author in ſo high eſteem among the moderate, as to deſerve a place in ſo very nice and choſen a collection. But the other, and principal reaſon is, that the author here intended, profeſſeth himſelf a ſceptic; the meaning of which, if I underſtand it right, is, either that he does not believe there is any ſuch thing as truth, or that he himſelf is but ſeeking after truth, and has not yet found it. Now this is by no means the caſe with the moderate, who are already in poſſeſſion of the *ne plus ultra* of human knowledge. For though ſome of their doctrines are changeable, by reaſon of the eſſential difference of perſons, things and times; yet, during the period of any doctrine, I have no where known ſtronger, or ſeverer dogmatiſts; as appears from their neglect of further inquiry, and ſovereign contempt of all

authors; and it is with pleaſure I can aſſure my countrymen, they are by far the moſt perfect of them all, carrying the conſequence of the ſcheme to the moſt raviſhing height. As to poetry, it will be ſufficient to read "the Pleaſures of the Imagination," and the Tragedy of Agis," if it be publiſhed; becauſe in it dramatic poetry is carried to the ſummit of perfection: and it is believed, by the author's friends, that there never will be a tragedy publiſhed after it, unleſs by ſomebody that is delirious. But whether the knowledge of this effect, and the compaſſion thence ariſing to future authors, may not, in a perſon of ſo much humility and ſelf-denial, and of ſo conſummate and diſintereſted benevolence, as that theatrical divine, wholly prevent the publication, I cannot tell; and therefore muſt leave it to be brought forth by the midwife Occaſion, from the womb of Time*.

But to give a ſtill higher proof of my deep concern for the improvement and edification of ingenious youth, I have taken the pains to extract very faithfully the ſum and ſubſtance of the above library, and do here preſent it to the world, under a name which is not without a meaning, though not intelligible to all, *viz.*

opposers.—In a certain university, about seven years ago (how it is now, I cannot so certainly tell) if a man had spoken honourably of Dr Samuel Clarke, it cannot be conceived with what derision he was treated by every boy of sixteen, who was wiser than to pay any regard to such a numscul, an enemy to the doctrine of necessity, and wholly ignorant of the moral sense.

* Agis, a tragedy, was published in the year 1758.

## The Athenian Creed.

I believe in the beauty and comely proportions of Dame Nature, and in almighty Fate, her only parent and guardian; for it hath been moſt graciouſly obliged (bleſſed be its name) to make us all very good.

I believe that the univerſe is a huge machine, wound up from everlaſting by neceſſity, and conſiſting of an infinite number of links and chains, each in a progreſſive motion towards the zenith of perfection, and meridian of glory; that I myſelf am a little glorious piece of clockwork, a wheel within a wheel, or rather a pendulum in this grand machine, ſwinging hither and thither by the different impulſes of fate and deſtiny; that my ſoul (if I have any) is an imperceptible bundle of exceeding minute corpuſcles, much ſmaller than the fineſt Holland ſand; and that certain perſons in a very eminent ſtation, are nothing elſe but a huge collection of neceſſary agents, who can do nothing at all.

I believe that there is no ill in the univerſe, nor any ſuch thing as virtue abſolutely conſidered; that thoſe things vulgarly called ſins, are only errors in the judgment, and foils to ſet off the beauty of nature, or patches to adorn her face; that the whole race of intelligent beings, even the devils themſelves, (if there are any,) ſhall finally be happy; ſo that Judas Iſcariot is by this time a glorified ſaint, and it is good for him that he hath been born.

In fine, I believe in the divinity of L. S——, the ſaintſhip of Marcus Antoninus, the perſpicuity and ſublimity of A——e, and the perpetual duration of

Mr. H——n's works, notwithſtanding their preſent tendency to oblivion. Amen.

## MAXIM VII.

*A moderate man muſt endeavour, as much as he handſomely can, to put off any appearances of devotion, and avoid all unneceſſary exerciſes of religious worſhip, whether public or private.*

I FULLY intended, upon this part of my ſubject, to have been at ſome pains in ſhewing the great indecency of a grave and apparently ſerious carriage, or of introducing any religious ſubject of converſation into promiſcuous company: but when I conſider how ſucceſsfully all viſible religion was attacked, both by wits and preachers, immediately after the reſtoration of King Charles II. how conſtantly any diſpoſition of this ſort hath been borne down by all men of taſte ever ſince that time, which is now near a whole century; as alſo how ſeldom any religious diſcourſe is to be met with at this day, either among clergy or laity, I ſhall only rejoice in myſelf, and congratulate my reader, upon the purity of the times, and proceed to the other part of the maxim.

Now, as to the public exerciſe of religious worſhip; although a certain meaſure of them is reaſonable enough, and though the office by which we have our bread, obliges us to be often engaged in them; yet a truly moderate man, without renouncing his calling, has it in his power to pare off a great many ſuperfluities with which the orthodox clergy

are apt to overload religion, and render it unpalatable to the polite world.

Being members of church judicatories, and, we hope the majority in moſt of them, the moderate party can diſcourage and ſtifle all motions for extraordinary faſts or thankſgivings; which experience has taught us ſerve only to promote idleneſs, and diſcourage induſtry. Upon the day that Henry V. fought at Agincourt, a ſolemn faſt was kept in England for his ſucceſs; and ſome hiſtorians are pleaſed to ſay, that the prayers of the nation had ſome ſhare in procuring the victory; but later hiſtories have diſproved this; and now it can be demonſtrated upon paper, that a faſt day in Scotland loſes 50,000l. to the nation, while nobody can make any calculation what it wins. For this reaſon, it was very refreſhing to hear, as we did lately, that even in the moſt diſtant and northerly corners of this country, there is a ſet of clergy of an heroic ſpirit, who are reſolved to reform their people, and beat them out of that unpolite and barbarous inclination, which many of them ſtill retain, of hearing ſermons.

With a view to the ſame good end, we can curtail our buſineſs at home, both as to the number and length of our pulpit performances. In our own families, though it would not perhaps yet be convenient to imitate the beau monde ſo very quickly, in diſcarding the worſhip of God altogether; yet we may, by degrees, ſometimes omit it, through hurry of buſineſs, at other times be dropping, now and then at leaſt, ſome parts of it; and in gentlemen's families, take care to give diſcreet intimations that we do not incline to put them out of their ordinary way,

or occaſion the leaſt interruption to the mirth of the company.

Sometimes indeed it may happen, by a concurrence of circumſtances, that one of us may, at bedtime, be unequally yoked with an orthodox brother, who may propoſe a little unſeaſonable devotion between ourſelves, before we lie down to ſleep; but there are twenty ways of throwing cold water upon ſuch a motion; or, if it ſhould be inſiſted upon, I could recommend a moderate way of complying with it, from the example of one of our friends, who, on a like occaſion, yielded ſo far, that he ſtood up at the back of a chair, and ſaid, "O Lord, we thank thee "for Mr Bayle's Dictionary. Amen." This was ſo far from ſpoiling good company, that it contributed wonderfully to promote ſocial mirth, and ſweetened the young men in a moſt agreeable manner for their reſt.——Whatever is forced is unnatural, and ought to be avoided; and therefore, what the Puritan ſaid of ſquare caps, we may apply to many modes of devotion, "That he would not wear them, becauſe his head was round."

The neceſſity of ſuch a conduct cannot be denied, when it it is conſidered what effect the length and frequency of public devotion has had in driving moſt of the faſhionable gentry from our churches altogether; and that even ſuch of them as ſtill vouchſafe their company ſometimes, are yet driven away from the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, where the ſervice is expected to be more tedious and tireſome. Now, the only way to regain them to the church, is to accommodate the worſhip, as much as may be, to

their taſte: the manner of doing which is ſo well known, that I will not ſpend time in explaining it.

I confeſs there has been ſometimes an ugly objection thrown up againſt this part of my argument, *viz.* That this deſertion of public worſhip by thoſe in high life, ſeems, in fact, to be contemporary with, and to increaſe, in a pretty exact proportion, to the attempts that have been, and are made to ſuit it to their taſte. It is aſſerted, that they are led to ſuch a conduct, not by the dictates of their reaſon, but by the depravation of their hearts; and therefore make uſe of the behaviour of the clergy, as an excuſe and juſtification of their conduct. In anſwer to this objection, I ſhall not pretend to ſay what uſe gentlemen may ſometimes make of our conduct, for I have known them very often prepoſterous in their judgment, condemning others for what they freely indulge in themſelves, and no leſs unthankful, rendering evil for good. But ſtill I ſay, there remains no ſtrength in the objection to a man of moderate principles; for it plainly comes much to the ſame thing at laſt, whether the mountain comes to the mouſe, or the mouſe to the mountain. If I ſhould meet a friend half-way, that had got at a diſtance from me, though he ſhould not move a foot, I am ſure we ſhould be nearer one another, than if I had kept my place as well as he.

But whatever be in this, I muſt acknowledge, that to be conſtantly whining and praying, looks ſo extremely orthodox-like, that I cannot help conceiving a prejudice at it, for this very reaſon; and I doubt not but every moderate man, will have the very ſame fellow-feeling. In truth, a great abundance of de-

votion has such a tendency to inflame one with zeal, that any man who would maintain his moderation, had best keep out of the reach of such ensnaring influence. Besides, it has been an old remark, and I begin to suspect there is some ground for it, that let one embrace what system of divinity he will, it is impossible to pray but according to the orthodox system. And whatever laudable pains had been taken by some of our friends, to avoid some of this inconvenience; yet, from what I have observed in the most successful of them, I must own, I can at present see no other remedy but to deal as little that way as possible.

## MAXIM VIII.

*In church-settlements, which are the principal causes that come before ministers for judgment, the only thing to be regarded is, who the patron and the great and noble heritors are for; the inclinations of the common people are to be utterly despised.*

THAT this maxim is invariably observed by all moderate men is certain, and may be attested by all that ever were present at a General Assembly of this national church. The case is not now as formerly, when presentations were held a grievance; for a presentation is "all in all" to a moderate man: and when there is no presentation, the greatness and nobility of the heritors are upon one side. I was witness once to a cause (which indeed unhappily miscarried) but there was a noble stand made for it by the moderate party, because there was a lord upon the side of the minority, although he had no interest

at all in the pariſh, but a ſmall bit of ground which he had got from a neighbour, in order to run a dike ſtraight. This appearance greatly rejoiced me, as it was a token to what perfection the ſpirit of moderation was arrived.

There are many reaſons upon which this maxim is founded; as the implacable hatred we bear to the elders and common people, and their conſtant wrong judgment, which has been illuſtrated above. As this is ſo very evident, I cannot paſs it without expreſſing my grief and aſtoniſhment, that ſo clear-ſighted an author, and in all reſpects ſo agreeable to our ſentiments, as lord Shafteſbury, ſhould have ſaid, in his Eſſay on the freedom of Wit and Humour, that it "belongs to men of ſlaviſh principles to affect a ſuperiority over the vulgar, and to deſpiſe the multitude." This hath made me doubt the truth of an aſſertion of Mr G. L. one of our own diſciples, that perfection is attainable in this life;" for, if ever any one attained to perfection, ſurely lord Shafteſbury was the man. But, to leſſen the difficulty a little, it is probable he had ſomething in his view, quite different from ſettling of kirks, when he wrote in this manner; for had he lived in our times, and been an heritor in Scotland, I can hardly allow myſelf to think, that ever he would have appeared on the ſide of the Chriſtian people; though, without all queſtion, he would have been choſen an elder, and ſent up, "duly atteſted," to the General Aſſembly.

But to return: The natural reſpect we owe to thoſe in great and high ſtations, claims of us the teſtimony of it required in the maxim. There is an original

and eſſential difference between gentry and common people, which ought to be particularly kept up here. For this, we have the authority of a certain worthy laird in the country, who always maintained upon his mind a ſenſe of his dignity, not as a man, but as a gentleman. Of this diſpoſition he gave the following laudable inſtance: Being a member of the kirk-ſeſſion in his pariſh, the exciſe-officer happened to come before them for fornication: and beſides the eccleſiaſtical cenſure, it was thought proper to apply to the civil magiſtrate to get him fined according to law; but as the law appoints different fines for men in different ſtations, when ſome propoſed he ſhould be fined at the rate of a gentleman, the worſhipful member above-mentioned, though known to be very zealous againſt vice, ſtrenuouſly oppoſed his having ſo much honour, and gave the following excellent reaſon for it: "Since God Almighty has been pleaſed to make a diſtinction between gentlemen and other men, why ſhould not we keep up this diſtinction in all caſes?" And ſo he was fined only as a commoner.

Another thing ſtrongly pleads for gentlemen having the chief hand in ſettling kirks, that now-a-days very few of our principal gentry attend ordinances, or receive any benefit by a miniſter after he is ſettled, unleſs perhaps talking of the news at a private viſit, or playing a game at back-gammon: and therefore it is but fair, that in lieu of the edification of the common people, they ſhould have the honour or profit of conferring the benefice. I ſhall only further add, that having no view of attending upon him for ordinary, they muſt be the beſt judges of his

preaching gifts, as being moſt diſintereſted: for which reaſon, non-reſiding heritors, inſtead of deſerving to be cut out altogether, as the ſtupid and undiſcerning orthodox would have it, are by much to be preferred to thoſe that reſide.

The reader will eaſily perceive, that I have here given much better reaſons for this conduct than thoſe commonly aſſigned, *viz.* the law, in the caſe of patrons; and the payment of the ſtipend, in the caſe of heritors. For, as to the firſt of theſe, it is quite from the purpoſe; for the law maintains its own ground as far as it goes, and is irreſiſtible: The only queſtion is, How we ſhall act as to what is left to us to determine? If the law hindered us to determine on any ſide we pleaſed, ſuch cauſes never would be pleaded before us. As to the other, about the heritors paying the ſtipend, it is not juſt; for the whole nation pays it: the heritor gets his lands with that burden upon them at firſt: and when one buys land from another he never pays for the ſtipend: ſo really an heritor, is never a penny the poorer of the ſtipend, except that happening commonly to ſee the money firſt, he may perhaps be ſorry that any body ſhould get it but himſelf. However, though theſe reaſons be not ſufficient at bottom, I deny not but it may be very proper to aſſign them to ſuch as are ignorant enough to yield to them, or who have ſo ſqueamiſh ſtomachs as not to be able to digeſt the ſolid reaſons upon which I have grounded my maxim. It is with the mind as with the body, it muſt be fed with ſuch things as it is able to bear, and as will beſt agree with its frame and conſtitution.

## MAXIM IX.

*While a ſettlement is carrying on, the candidate againſt whom there is a ſtrong oppoſition from the people, muſt be looked upon, and every where declared to be, a perſon of great worth, and remarkable abilities; provided always, that if ever the ſame perſon, after he is ſettled, be at pains, and ſucceed in gaining the peoples's affection, he ſhall then fall as much below the ordinary ſtandard in his character, as before he was raiſed above it.*

BOTH parts of this maxim will appear very reaſonable to all that ſee with our eyes. The people being againſt a man, is a certain ſign of his being a good preacher, as has been formerly proved: it is alſo a pretty ſure ſign of his being of moderate principles, "which make the comers thereunto perfect;" and theſe two things are ſufficient to juſtify us in raiſing his character. It is indeed often abſolutely neceſſary, when a proceſs is in agitation, that it may help him out with a ſcanty concurrence, and have an influence upon the church courts, which are compoſed of a mixed multitude. Nor is it eaſy to conceive, how excellent and well invented a weapon this is, the giving a man an extraordinary and high character. It neceſſarily imprints a kind of veneration of him on the minds of his judges; and hath this peculiar advantage, that there is no parrying of it: for whatever ſome few of different principles may think, they dare not plainly contradict it.—Every man has it in his power to ſpeak

well of one another, but nobody muſt take the liberty to ſpeak ill of a man in a public court, unleſs he can alſo venture to give him a libel. Many a time have I heard young men highly extolled in church courts, when their ſettlement was in dependence, who, in ſtrict truth, were but middling kind of men, and ſome of them very heavy, who afterwards proved no ſmall incumbrance upon the moderate body.

As to the other part of the maxim, taking away their character for ability when they apoſtatize to orthodoxy, this will be eaſily accounted for, if it be remembered how they came by it. It was freely given them; and therefore it may be taken away at pleaſure: It was given to bring them in as an additional ſtrength to the moderate intereſt; and therefore, when they forſake that intereſt, it is but juſt to deprive them of it. If any ſhall object, that this is not agreeable to the ſtrict rules of veracity, I deſire it may be remembered, that the preſent faſhionable ſcheme of moral philoſophy is much improved in compariſon of that which prevailed ſome time ago. Virtue does not now conſiſt in "acting agreeably to the nature of things," as Dr. Clarke affirms; nor in "acting according to truth," which an old ſchool-maſter, one Woollaſton, once wrote a book to prove; but in "the good of the whole;" and therefore an illuſtrious and noble end ſanctifies the means of attaining it. Our ſentiments, in this reſpect, are deſcribed by an anonymous poet, who, I believe meant no good to us; however it points out the character pretty plainly thus:

"To second him rose surly Peter,
"An angry bigot for good-nature:
"That truth should valued be by measure,
"And weight, he thought;
"That inch of truth, in courtesy,
"To span of interest should give way;
"And pound of gain, for ounce of lie,
"Is cheaply bought."

If it be further objected, That ſtill this only ſatisfies ourſelves, whereas in the caſe in hand, it is neceſſary to ſatisfy the world. As to this, we can freely ſay, that the man was good, but now he is bad; and that is no contradiction: for though the Confeſſion of Faith maintains the infallible perſeverance of the ſaints in grace, yet we never affirmed the neceſſary perſeverance of men in moderation, theſe two things being entirely diſtinct the one from the other. Some of your friends do fall away now and then: our ſtrength, for ordinary, conſiſts in young men; for there are ſeveral, who, in old age, through the decay of their faculties, begin to incline a little to orthodoxy, and then, we term them, not "old men," but "old wives." However, there are alſo ſome, who not only do perſevere, but glorioufly improve in moderation in old age, and to their dying day: of which number was the late Rev. Mr. J. R. in K. whoſe name I have thought proper to record in this immortal work, that it may be had in everlaſting remembrance.

## MAXIM X.

*Whenever we have got a ſettlement decided over the belly perhaps of the whole people in the pariſh, by a majority in the General Aſſembly, the victory ſhould*

*be improved, by appointing ſome of the orthodox oppoſers of the ſettlement to execute it, eſpecially thoſe of them that pretend to have a ſcruple of conſcience at having an active hand in any ſuch ſettlement.*

THEY do not deſerve a victory, who know not how to puſh it, or to improve the advantage they have gained. A ſentence of the General Aſſembly, even as of any other court, ſignifies nothing, if it be not executed. To reſt ſatisfied with the victory we have gained, by the bare deciſion, would indeed be yielding it back again, and loſing in fact, what we gained in appearance. This is ſelf-evident. But the next point is, Who ſhall be employed in executing it; thoſe who appointed, or thoſe who pretend a ſcruple of conſcience at doing what appears to their diſordered intellects to be what they call ſinful?—Now, as to this, allow me only to aſk a few plain queſtions. Is not every ſociety divided into the governing, and the governed, the maſters, and the ſervants? What is the ſubject of any debate in the Aſſembly, that ends in a vote, but to determine who is the one, and who is the other? when once a vote has made us maſters, does not the ſame vote make the minority ſervants? And do I need to aſk further, if there is any piece of drudgery to be performed, who it belongs to, the maſters or the ſervants? Apply this then to the caſe in hand: Who would hazard his own life in fording a river, if he had a ſervant to try the depth of it before him? Who would chuſe to go to a pulpit under a ſhower of ſtones from an enraged populace, if he had others under his authority,

whom he could ſend upon the ſame ungracious errand?

Now, the uſefulneſs of this conduct is very evident: for it is plain, they will either obey or diſobey. If the firſt is the caſe, then we ſhall have the honour of bringing them, and they themſelves the profit and advantage of being brought, into the hatred and abhorrence of the common people: in commendation of which ſtate, enough has been ſaid already. If they diſobey, they muſt be depoſed, and caſt out as incorrigible, to make way for thoſe that are better than themſelves. This will be to the advantage of the church: for young men, *cæteris paribus*, are much better than old.

As this method of purging the church of corrupt members is like to be a prevailing meaſure in our days, I ſhall endeavour to ſupport it by a few, but theſe demonſtrative arguments: in moſt of which, indeed, I ſhall have little more than the honour of recording the ſentiments and reaſoning of ſome eminent men that were members of the two laſt General Aſſemblies.

In the *firſt* place, it is certain, that the command of a proper authority is ſufficient to make any action not only innocent and lawful, but perfectly right and ſtrictly obligatory: inſomuch, that if an executioner ſhould be commanded to hang his father or ſon for praying to God, or reading his Bible; nay, if one of Jeſus Chriſt's diſciples had happened to have been a Roman ſoldier, and ſhould have been commanded to crucify his maſter, he ſhould have betrayed the moſt egregious ignorance

of the Chriſtian religion, had he made the leaſt difficulty in executing ſuch orders.

It is to no purpoſe here to object the immutability of moral laws, and the ſupreme authority of God: for if obedience to human authority be one of his laws, as it plainly is, then all his other laws muſt be ſubmitted to ſuch alterations and ſuſpenſions as our ſuperiors think proper. The apoſtles do indeed ſometimes ſpeak of "obeying God rather than man;" but we explain this as eaſily as we do another text, in the third chapter of the Romans, which ſeems to teach, that "we ſhould not do evil that good may come:" for as in the one caſe, whatever promotes good cannot be evil; ſo, in the other, if human authority be once duly interpoſed, it is obeying God to comply with whatever is enjoined thereby; and therefore it is impoſſible that ever there can an interference happen. Beſides, ſome allowance muſt, no doubt, be made for the difference of times, and diſadvantages which all the ancient writers lay under, the late fine improvements in the ſcience of morals not having then been excogitated. But I can aſſure the reader, the principle which I have laid down, is now the doctrine of this church, wherein both divines and lawyers who are members of our Aſſemblies, are entirely agreed, and will not ſuffer any body to call it in queſtion. And what an obvious beauty has moral virtue gained from the delicate and ſkilful hands that have lately been employed in dreſſing her ladyſhip! She was once ſtiff and rigid, like ice or cold iron; now ſhe is yielding as water, and, like hot iron from the furnace, can eaſily be beaten into what ſhape you pleaſe.

And here I muſt ſay, I think it ſome pity, that ſo fine a genius as Grotius did not flouriſh ſomewhat later, or that the moral ſenſe was not ſtarted a little earlier, and ſo that great man preſerved from falling into ſo great a blunder as the maintaining, that "even military authority may be reſiſted; and that a caſe may be given, when a ſoldier ought to diſobey orders:" for now it is a ſettled point, that even eccleſiaſtical authority (which, if there were any difference, I allow ought rather to be the milder of the two) is ſufficient to bear down before it what were once called the "eternal,' no leſs, and "immutable laws of morality;" and, by divine authority, is "paramount to divine authority itſelf."

I ſhall only obſerve two very plain and clear advantages in this principle, whereby it will appear, how happy it is that the church hath fallen ſo entirely in with it, and proceeds ſo uniformly upon it.

The *firſt* is, that in caſe of neceſſity, an action which no body would chuſe perhaps to take the weight of upon them, may yet be done without the leaſt hazard of any body's being called to account for it in the other world. If the doer of an action were to be the judge of its lawfulneſs, he might be damned perhaps for doing it, in caſe it were found to be wrong; but upon this principle of implicit obedience to his ſuperiors, there is no repelling his defence: it was not his province to judge whether it was lawful or unlawful; and the Aſſemby or Commiſſion who gave the order, being bodies politic, are, by that time, all diſſolved, and appear only in the capacity of individuals.

The other advantage is this, that if the ſupreme

court of any kind, were allowed to be the only proper judge of the lawfulneſs of its own appointments, it would be impoſſible, in the nature of things, that ever there could be a ſeparation in the church, or a rebellion in the ſtate. The juſtneſs of this conſequence is ſo evident, that I ſhall not ſpend any time in illuſtrating it, but heartily wiſh the principle from which it flows, were univerſally embraced.

In the *ſecond* place, the diſobedient brethren have but one pretence for their conduct, which is groundleſs, *viz.* a "ſcruple of conſcience:" as to which, hear Dr Goodman, a noble Engliſh writer: "A tender conſcience is nothing elſe but an ignorant and uninſtructed mind; or a ſickly, melancholy, and ſuperſtitious underſtanding." I could eaſily ſhew, that there is no ſuch thing as a real ſcruple of conſcience: the lawyers in the General Aſſembly, who are men of as great penetration as any in the land, have moſt of them plainly declared, that they do not conceive it poſſible. A certain learned gentleman of this court hath aſſured us, that taking away miniſters ſtipends would enlighten their conſcience. The renowned author of Hudibras is known to be of the ſame opinion: from which two authorities I will endeavour to amend Dr Goodman's definition: for a "tender conſcience is not an ignorant mind," but a "full ſtomach." This accounts for appearances better, and particularly for the epithet of tender, commonly given to it, as all phyſicians are agreed, that a wound upon a full ſtomach is very dangerous. Having thus rooted up the very foundation of this pretence, it is needleſs to go through the ſeveral particulars inſiſted upon by the

diſobedient as ſtraitening to them: and therefore I ſhall but in a word mention one of them. They pretend it is a profane farce to confer, in a ſolemn manner, the care of the ſouls of a certain people, when nothing is really conferred but a legal title to a beneſice: as alſo, that the candidate cannot conſcientiouſly anſwer ſeveral of the queſtions commonly put on thoſe occaſions. But is it not extremely ſtrange, that any body can be ſo dull as not to regard theſe queſtions in their only true and proper light, as a neceſſary piece of formality, without which, a charge of horning for the ſtipends could not be raiſed? And as to the other part of the objection, whether it be not much more a mock ceremony, to ordain a man to a congregation, when a title to the beneſice cannot be conferred, I ſhall leave the reader to determine, as if the caſe were his own.

The *third* principle upon which our conduct is founded, is of ſuch undoubted verity, that the bare mentioning of it is ſufficient to convince all the world how little it ſtands in need of any proof; accordingly no moderate man views it in any other light than as an axiom, or ſelf-evident truth; namely, That if any excuſe for diſobedience were once admitted, or any indulgence granted to theſe tender-conſcienced inferiors, there would be an end of all government in an inſtant; neither commands nor obedience could proceed one ſtep further, but every individual inſtrument of power, in that fatal ſociety, aſtoniſhed at the monſtrous phænomenon, would ſtare at one another; all the wheels of the political machine would ſtop at once; nay, would ſplit

into ten thouſand pieces; every relation and connection of their parts would be inſtantly diſſolved, and the beautiful whole would ruſh into a wild chaos of anarchy and confuſion. The reader will eaſily believe, I am too wiſe to offer a proof of an axiom or ſelf-evident truth *; however, I think it but fair to inform him, that ſuch is the nature of paper and ink, that they have not the power of doing it all the juſtice even in narration, of which it is capable elſewhere. Whoever has heard the demonſtrative tone, or beheld the infallible air, and geſture of certainty, with which it has been aſſerted by an Aſſembly-orator, would be aſhamed that he ever ſtood in need to be put in mind of it: for my own part, I am ſo entirely influenced by it, that if the moſt faithful, diligent, and uſeful ſervant, ſhould, in the humbleſt manner repreſent to me, that he had a ſcruple about executing any of my orders, and beg to be excuſed, ſuppoſe from ſhaving me on Sunday morning, and I ſhould unfortunately be ſo far off my guard, as for once to indulge him, I would immediately diſſolve my whole family, and never more think of lodging with a living ſoul under the ſame unhappy roof.

Againſt this principle, however, ſome have pre-

* I desire that this general assertion may not be misunderstood, as if I intended a reflection upon some late discoveries in moral philosophy; for though an axiom, or self-evident truth, cannot be proved; yet a great genius, who can do any thing, may take a view of these same axioms, dignify and adorn them, by writing an essay round about each of them, and prove that they ought to be called Feelings. This is greatly to the advantage of the commonwealth of learning, as experience hath shewn.

ſumed to object particular inſtances in Scripture-hiſtory, of ſuch excuſes being actually admitted, without any apparent diſſolution of the conſtitution; ſuch as Gideon's paſſing from his order to his ſon to kill the two princes of Midian, and ſlaying them himſelf; and that of Saul, who when his guards refuſed to fall upon the prieſts, committed that affair to another, without any farther noiſe. Now, not to mention the difficulty of arguing from facts of an ancient date, cited only by one author, and that very curtly, I humbly conceive theſe inſtances produced, make directly againſt the objection; for it appears to me very evident, that the kingdom was taken from Saul and given to David, for this very reaſon, he being unfit to govern, by thus allowing his authority to be trampled upon. Nor will it be eaſy to aſſign any different reaſon, why none of the poſterity of Gideon were ever permitted to rule Iſrael. There are ſome later inſtances of that ſort nearer home, thrown up by ſhallow politicians; as that of the hangman at Ayr, who refuſed to execute the Whigs in King Charles the II.'s time; and that which happened a few years ago among ourſelves, when the civil government overlooked the diſobedience of a ſet of refractory clergymen, who refuſed to read the act of parliament againſt the murderers of Captain Porteous. In the firſt of theſe caſes, the judges acted in a laudable manner; for they deprived the man of his benefice: and for the crime of his diſobedience, I am perſuaded he died childleſs, for I have never heard of any of his poſterity in that part of the country. In the other caſe, I confeſs the government was much to be

blamed; and have long been of opinion, that their deteſtable lenity, at that time, was the cauſe of the late rebellion, which followed ſo ſoon after it. It is to be hoped they will take warning for the time to come; for I am perſuaded, one other inſtance of the ſame kind would effectually ſet the Pretender upon the throne of Britain.

The laſt principle which I ſhall mention, and which, with the reſt, I am ſure is abundantly ſufficient to ſupport the maxim laid down for our conduct, is, That the beſt method of conviction, and of all others the moſt proper for a church-court, is that of authority, ſupported in its higheſt rigour by cenſures, which may be felt by men of the dulleſt capacities, as depoſition, and ſuſpenſion from benefice as well as office. If the goodneſs of an argument, or the excellency of a method, is to be meaſured by the frequency of recourſe that is had to it, I think, none can diſpute precedency with this. It muſt be allowed to be, of all others, the moſt Chriſtian method; it reigned over the whole church without a rival, for many ages; and though proteſtants for a while pretended to find fault with it in the hands of their enemies; yet, which of them all, when they became able to make uſe of it, have not tried it in their turn? And whether we conſider the majority, by whoſe hands this weapon is to be wielded, or the minority upon whom the weight of it muſt fall, it will plainly appear to be admirably ſuited to the preſent times. As to the beaſts of burden, who fall to be driven by this method, they are known to be ſuch dull and lifeleſs animals (as they are moſt of them paſt the vigour of youth) that no other argument can make

any impreſſion upon them. However a horſe might be managed, who is a generous creature, no body could think of another method to make an aſs move, but conſtantly to belabour its ſides. There cannot be a clearer evidence of the dulneſs and ſtupidity of theſe obſtinate beings we have to do with, than the expence of rhetoric that has been thrown away upon them, to perſuade them of a thing as clear as the ſun, *viz.* that if they had any conſcience they would depoſe themſelves, and yield their place to more pliable ſucceſſors. They even pretend conſcience here again; and tell us they are placed in a ſtation which they dare not deſert, unleſs they be thruſt out of it. Now, let the reader judge how incapable of perſuaſion one muſt be, to find difficulty in ſo plain a caſe; and therefore how neceſſary it is, that a more effectual method ſhould be tried.

On the other hand, the majority in Aſſemblies and Commiſſions ſeems at preſent to be peculiarly adapted to ſuch a method of conviction as I have mentioned. One part of our ſtrength lies in the laity who attend our judicatures; theſe, as they poſſeſs no benefice in the church, they are out of the reach of this ſort of cenſure, and therefore are only capable of inflicting, but not of ſuffering it; and as they are not much accuſtomed to ſolving caſes of conſcience, what other method can occur to them, when things of this nature are thrown in their way, than the more gentleman-like method, for which Alexander the Great is ſo juſtly celebrated, *viz.* cutting the troubleſome knot, which they would find tedious and difficult to untie? The reſt of our ſide

conſiſts in clergy of the youngeſt ſort; who as they are imitators of the manners of gentlemen, may be ſuppoſed to act with the ſame ſpirit in public judgment. Though they can give flouriſhes of rhetoric enough; nay, though of one of them in particular, I may literally ſay,

> ———He cannot ope
> His mouth, but out there flies a trope;

yet as for logic, it is well known this part of education is fallen into great contempt; and it is not to be expected, that ſuch briſk and lively ſpirits, who have always hated every thing that looked ſcholaſtic-like, can bear to be tied down to the ſtrict methods of argumentation. But though we were greater maſters in this method of conviction, yet our blood may be eaſily ſuppoſed too warm for any thing that is ſo ſlow, and at beſt ſo uncertain in its ſucceſs. No; we are own the majority, and our power, as a late acquiſition, is the more agreeable for being new; we muſt taſte the ſweets of authority, which can only be by compelling our inferiors to obey us. If our ſentences are executed, it is the ſame thing to the new incumbent, the ſame thing to the church in general, and the ſame thing to us, whether the executors are willing or unwilling; for, as to that whole matter of conſcience, about which ſo much noiſe is made, I have already related our ſentiments; from whence it is evident, that ſuch nonſenſe, as laying a violent temptation in men's way to act againſt the light of their own mind, is nothing but words without a meaning. And as to the expreſſion of the apoſtle Paul, about church-power, which

he uſes over and over again, that it is "for edification, and not for deſtruction," it is no ſecret, that there is a various reading; and if once we had, "for deſtruction, and not for edification," eſtabliſhed as the true reading, which, if we were dealers in criticiſm, might perhaps be eaſily done, we ſhould not only get rid of this troubleſome text, but make an acquiſition of it on our ſide of the queſtion, to the confuſion of our greateſt enemies.

## MAXIM XI.

*The character which moderate men give their adverſaries, of the orthodox party, muſt always be that of "knaves" or "fools;" and, as occaſion ſerves, the ſame perſon (if it will paſs) may be repreſented as a "knave" at one time, and as a "fool" at another.*

THE juſtneſs of this proceeding may be eaſily made appear. The principles of moderation being ſo very evident to reaſon, it is a demonſtration, that none but unreaſonable men can reſiſt their influence: and therefore we cannot ſuppoſe, that ſuch as are againſt us can be ſo from conſcience. Beſides, ſetting aſide the ſuperior intrinſic excellence of the one ſet of principles above the other, there are much ſtronger carnal motives, to ſpeak in their own ſtyle, to act in their way, than in ours; and therefore there is great ground to conclude, that they act from hypocriſy, but not ſo of us. They pleaſe the people; we pleaſe, at leaſt endeavour to pleaſe, thoſe of high rank. Now there are many remarkable advantages they gain by pleaſing the people; whereas it is evident, *ex poſt facto*, that we

gain nothing by pleaſing the gentry; for they never trampled upon us ſo much as of late; and have entirely defeated our application to parliament for augmentation of ſtipend. So far are we from being in any reſpect the better of the gentry, that we have really great reaſon to complain of them; for when we have endeavoured to ingratiate ourſelves with them, by ſoftneſs and complaiſance, and by going conſiderable lengths with them in their freedom, they oftentimes moſt ungenerouſly deſpiſe us but the more; nay, many of them have firſt taught us to live at a high rate, and then refuſe to give us any thing to keep it up. Now, as we, men of reaſon, could not but foreſee this, it is plain, nothing but the moſt diſintereſted virtue could lead us to act as we have done. Whereas, on the other hand, the orthodox have gained, and do poſſeſs the eſteem of the common people; and ſo it is plain they could have no other view in their conduct but to attain it. However, to ſhew our charity, we allow there are ſome on their ſide who are indifferently honeſt; but theſe are men of very weak intellectuals, as is evident from their not thinking as we do.

The other part of the maxim is abundantly reaſonable, but not ſo eaſily put in practice, *viz.* repreſenting the ſame individual perſon ſometimes as a knave, and ſometimes as a fool. This affair is ſometimes unluckily managed, when it is incautiouſly attempted. In order to its being done ſucceſsfully, therefore, let the following rules be obſerved.

*1ſt.* Let a man be repreſented as a knave and

hypocrite to one ſort of people in the world; and let him be repreſented as a fool, not to the ſame, but to another ſort: let the firſt be chiefly your better ſort of people, particularly thoſe among them that hate much profeſſion of religion, and are apt to call all ſtrictneſs hypocriſy: the other, it is plain, muſt be the ſimple and credulous.

The *ſecond* rule is, that, if poſſible, there ſhould be different perſons employed in ſpreading theſe different calumnies of the ſame man. By this apparent conſiſtency to every one's opinion with itſelf, they will be the more eaſily maintained, and be the leſs liable to diſcovery: and thus, as the ſeveral wheels of a watch, by oppoſite motions, promote the ſame end; ſo the ſeveral members of the moderate body, by ſeemingly different and oppoſite means, conſpire in promoting the good of the whole. The principle upon which theſe two rules are founded, is, That probability ought to be ſtudied in every falſehood we would have believed; which principle is laid down, and finely illuſtrated, in the art of Political Lying, ſaid to be wrote by one Dr. Arbuthnot.

It will not, I hope, be reckoned wandering from my ſubject, when I obſerve, that the very ſame principle of ſtudying probability is to be applied to the celebration of the characters of our friends, as well as the defamation of our enemies. Theſe two deſigns indeed have a very ſtrong connection, and do mutually ſupport and promote one another. Praiſing one character is, by neceſſary and manifeſt conſequence, a defamation of its oppoſite; and in ſome caſes, which may eaſily be conceived, it is the

moſt eligible, and the moſt effectual way of doing it. I have been preſent at a converſation, where the chief intention of one of the ſpeakers, and what he had moſt at heart, was to ruin the character and reputation of a certain perſon who happened to be mentioned, with his hearers; but he could not well know whether they were able to bear a large quantity of unmixed reproach, he choſe the wiſer and ſafer method, of celebrating another character, and drawing it with all his art, in ſuch a manner, as the ſtrongeſt oppoſition poſſible might appear, in ſome of its circumſtances, to that of the perſon intended to be wounded by reflection.

But in this, as in the former caſe, great judgment and prudence muſt be uſed; nothing muſt be ſaid, the contrary of which is, or may be eaſily known to be true; and particularly all the antiquated orthodox phraſes, in giving a miniſter's character, are to be religiouſly avoided. The neceſſity of this direction will beſt appear from an example: Suppoſe I ſhould ſay of Momus, he was a youth of early, and continues to be a man of eminent piety, walking with God, and ſpending many hours every day in ſecret devotion; has a deep and ſtrong ſenſe upon his mind, of the worth and value of time, and lays it out wholly in fitting others and himſelf for eternity; has ſo ſacred a regard for truth, that he never tells a lie, even in jeſt; has a moſt humble deportment, and is perfectly free from that prevailing fault of triumphing over the weak, or ſhame-faced by raillery or impudence; has been frequently heard to expreſs his diſpleaſure at all levity of carriage, and frothy un-

profitable diſcourſe, in perſons of the ſacred characters: and as he was always himſelf remarkable for a purity of converſation, ſo he cannot allow the moſt diſtant alluſion to obſcenity to paſs without a reproof; in ſhort, his whole behaviour commands both the reverence and love of all who have the happineſs of his acquaintance. I ſay, if I ſhould draw the character of Momus in this manner, as ſome authors do thoſe of the Puritan clergy about a hundred years ago, it is probable he would give me no thanks: and indeed, he would owe me none: for it would have much more the air of a ſatire than of a panegyric.

It is, however, poſſible to draw the character of the ſame perſon, which ſhall have ſome truth, and much probability in it: and which as being the character of a modern, ſhall be much more in the modern commendatory ſtyle. He is a man of a moſt ſprightly and lively fancy, of an inexhauſtible fund of wit and humour, where he pleaſes to diſplay it, though the iniquity of the times has, in ſome meaſure, checked its indulgence. He is, notwithſtanding the grimneſs of his countenance, entirely free from any ſourneſs or moroſeneſs of temper, ſo that in his converſation a man may enjoy all manner of eaſe and freedom. He is a moſt genteel and elegant preacher and poet; and, to my knowledge a man of a warm and good heart *.

* This expression, "a man of a good heart," is much in fashion among the moderate, and of great significancy and beauty; but it is only to be used in speaking to persons of some degree of taste; for I know a particular instance in which it disobliged the person it was intended to gain.

## MAXIM XII.

*As to the world in general, a moderate man is to have great charity for Atheiſts and Deiſts in principle, and for perſons that are looſe and vicious in their practice: but none at all for thoſe that have a high profeſſion of religion, and a great pretence to ſtrictneſs in their walk and converſation.*

THIS maxim ſeems to be pretty ſtrongly laid; and yet, upon a ſtrict enquiry, it will be found that we follow it very exactly. That we have charity for the firſt-mentioned ſort of perſons, is evident; for we endeavour to accommodate ourſelves to them, and draw as near them as poſſibly we can, inſiſting upon nothing in our ſermons but what may be ſaid to be a part, or an improvement of the law of nature. And as to our having no charity for the other ſort, it is as evident; witneſs the odious idea we have affixed to the name of a profeſſor (unleſs when it is meant of a profeſſor in a college;) and witneſs our ironical way of ſpeaking, when we ſay of a man, he has a "grave ſanctified air." Nay, even holineſs and godlineſs are ſeldom taken by us in a very good ſenſe; when we ſay, "One of the holy brethren," or, "A good godly lady," they would miſtake us very much that would think we had a high opinion of any of theſe perſons.

This our conduct a certain young man of the orthodox-ſide, reflected very ſeverely upon, as he thought, in a ſermon, which he afterwards printed, in words to this purpoſe: "They can indeed talk very fluently of univerſal benevolence, and a charitable can-

did diſpoſition—but their charity is confined to thoſe who favour their opinions, or perhaps are indifferent about religion altogether; while the leaſt appearance of ſerious devotion, or fervent zeal for God, is enough to forfeit it. Indeed this charity is as myſterious as the faith of the moſt bigotted Catholic; it is equally full of contradictions; and ſeems reſolved to found itſelf, not upon evidence, but upon the want of it. Where every thing has the worſt appearance, there they will believe well; but where the outward conduct is blameleſs, they candidly ſuſpect that nothing but hypocriſy lies at the bottom." But, with the leave of this ſmart youth, what he ſays of us is very true, and we maintain it to be right: for the very meaning of charity is to believe without evidence; it is no charity at all to believe good of a man when we ſee it, but when we do not ſee it. It is with charity in ſentiment, as with charity in ſupplying the wants of the neceſſitous; we do not give alms to the rich but to the poor. In like manner, when there are all outward appearances of goodneſs, it requires no charity to believe well of the perſons: but when there are none at all, or perhaps very many to the contrary, then I will maintain it is charity, and charity in its perfection, to believe well of them. Well, ſince it is your will, have charity for them; but have charity alſo for ſuch as are apparently good. Oh! the ſtupid world! and ſlow of heart to conceive! is it not evident to a demonſtration, that if the appearance of wickedneſs be the foundation of charity, the appearance of goodneſs, which is its oppoſite, muſt be the foundation of a quite contrary judgment, viz. ſuſpecting,

or rather believing ill of them? If any ſtill inſiſt, That if not charity, yet juſtice ſhould incline us to believe well of them, as I have ſeemingly confeſſed; I anſwer, That we have no occaſion for juſtice, if we have charity; for charity is more than juſtice, even as the whole is more than a part: but though I have ſuppoſed, *argumentandi gratia*, that juſtice requires this, yet it is not my ſentiment; for the perſons meant being uſually great enemies to us, are thereby cut off from any claim in juſtice to our good opinion; and being alſo, as has been proved, improper objects of charity, it remains that we ſhould hate them with perfect hatred, as in fact we do.

## MAXIM XIII.

*All moderate men are joined together in the ſtricteſt bond of union, and do never fail to ſupport and defend one another to the utmoſt, be the cauſe they are engaged in what it will.*

THIS maxim I do not inſert ſo much for the inſtruction of the ignorant, as for the perfection of my own plan, and the honour of the whole body; for I have hardly known it ever fail in any inſtance whatever. And as this character belongs, without controverſy, to all the moderate, ſo it belongs to them by an excluſive privilege; for they do moſt loudly complain of, and load with moſt opprobrious epithets, any of the orthodox, who attempt to imitate them in it, as has been ſometimes known. Nothing indeed can be more juſt and reaſonable than theſe complaints; for ſuch conduct in the orthodox is a

plain deſertion of their own principles, a robbery and invaſion of the property of others. Conſcience, upon which they pretend to act, is, of all things, the moſt ſtiff and inflexible: and cannot by any art, be moulded into another ſhape, than that which it naturally bears; whereas the whole principles of moderation are moſt gentle and ductile, and may be applied to almoſt all purpoſes imaginable.

If any, through an envious infidelity, entertain a doubt of the truth aſſerted in the maxim, they are referred, for ſatisfaction, to the hiſtory of the proceedings of this church for theſe twenty years paſt, which I take to be the true reforming period; and are hereby deſired to produce an inſtance in which any moderate man, wiſe or unwiſe, old or young, grave or ſprightly, failed to concur in ſupporting one of his own ſide, whatever was his cauſe, active or paſſive, a project for advancement, or the danger of a proſecution. Let but one of us ſtart a ſcheme, in which he may find his account, or become candidate for an office, the whole, upon the firſt impulſe, as the concordant ſtrings of a muſical inſtrument anſwer to the touch, return and reverberate the ſound. If Momus unwarily makes a ſally into the territories of "good-humoured vice," and is unhappily betrayed by thoſe who ought not to have been truſted; how powerfully is he upheld by the graveſt of the party, and the uncharitable malevolent enemy ſtung and deſtroyed, like the bear in the fable, for diſturbing the hive of induſtrious bees? Nay, as a yet ſtronger inſtance, (being more againſt nature) I could ſhew, in the records of a certain preſbytery, declarations ſigned by the moſt

moderate hands, and yet containing as high and ranting expreſſions in favour of the rights of the Chriſtian people, as ever were uſed by the moſt orthodox writer; becauſe by a wonderful concurrence of circumſtances, they ſerved, at that time, to promote the ſettlement of a moderate man.

Every eye muſt immediately perceive the beauty and excellence of this part of our character. What more amiable than union? or what more neceſſary to the ſupport of any ſociety? and what more hateful and horrid than diſcord and diviſion? Is it not alſo, by this very means, that we have obtained the victory, and do ſtill preſerve our ſuperiority over the orthodox party? They are wholly ignorant of the laws of ſociety, as they have been lately well explained by ſome of our brethren in print; and know not that all who enter into it, give up their rights as individuals, and are bound "to follow what they diſapprove;" to ſee with the eyes, and act for the intereſt of the whole body.

It muſt be no ſmall commendation of ſuch conduct, that in ſo doing we either follow, or are followed, by the moſt eminent and illuſtrious characters in this nation. It is probable there may be ſeveral controverted elections tried before the parliament in a ſhort time; and I dare ſay, any wiſe man will fortel their iſſue in each caſe, much more certainly from the character of the perſon, than from the merits of the cauſe. And it is with ſome pleaſure I obſerve, that whoever began this practice firſt, we have carried it to the greateſt perfection: for amongſt us, the characters of men have been openly pleaded in defence of their cauſe, which, if I

am not miſtaken, hath hardly ever been done in any civil court.

How admirably does this principle fall in with the ſcheme of philoſophy upon which the preſent generation is formed! It illuſtrates the truth of Mr H—n's doctrine, That virtue is founded upon inſtinct and affection, and not upon reaſon: that benevolence is its ſource, ſupport and perfection: and that all the particular rules of conduct are to be ſuſpended, when they ſeem to interfere with the general good. In ſhort, it ſhews that the moderate are a tranſcript in miniature, and do moſt diſtinctly exhibit the order, proportion, and unity of deſign in the univerſal ſyſtem.

Time would fail me, if I ſhould go through all the excellencies of this crowning maxim; and therefore I ſhall only further obſerve, that it excels all the known principles of action for clearneſs and perſpicuity. In order to determine which ſide to chuſe in a diſputed queſtion, it requires no long diſcuſſions of reaſon, no critical inquiry into the truth of controverted facts, but only ſome knowledge of the characters of men; a ſtudy much more agreeable, as well as more common, than that of books. To ſpeak more properly, it requires no ſtudy at all of any kind; for, as to the groſs, or general tendency of a character, common fame communicates the impreſſion, and ſeldom or never deceives us. This is probably the reaſon that the maxim, as has been obſerved at the beginning of the illuſtration, is conſtantly and unerringly followed by the moderate of every age and condition: on which account I give it as my opinion, that it

be added to the number of the feelings, which are at preſent ſo much upon the growing hand.

Thus I have laid down and illuſtrated theſe excellent maxims, not without labour and expence of thought; and, I think, carried them ſo far as to make a complete ſyſtem for the education and accompliſhment of a moderate clergyman, for his guidance in public judgment, and his direction as to private practice. And now, courteous reader, as a traveller, after having gone through the different parts of a country, aſcends ſome eminence to review the whole, let us ſtand ſtill and rejoice over the happy ſtate of our mother-church of Scotland, in which moderation ſo greatly prevails; and let us rejoice in hope of what improvements ſhe may yet arrive at, by adhering to theſe maxims, now digeſted into ſuch admirable form and order. O what noble, ſublime, and impenetrable ſermons ſhall now be preached! What victories and triumphs ſhall be obtained over the ſtupid populace, by forced ſettlements, which never have ſuch a beautiful and orderly form, as when finiſhed by ſoldiers, marching in comely array, with ſhining arms: a perfect image of the church militant! And what perfectly virtuous and ſinleſs lives ſhall be led by thoſe clergy, who with ſteady eye, regard the good of this vaſt whole, which never yet went wrong! There is nothing indeed that any way tarniſhes the beauty of this proſpect, but the miſcarriage of the augmentation ſcheme; over which I could now lament in elegiac ſtrains, but that my hope is not yet quite extinct; for who can tell whether, when we ſhall have brought moderation to perfection, when we

ſhall have driven away the whole common people to the Seceders, who alone are fit for them, and captivated the hearts of the gentry to a love of our ſolitary temples, they may not be pleaſed to allow us more ſtipends, becauſe we ſhall have nothing to do but to ſpend them?

I would now propoſe, that the next enſuing General Aſſembly would appoint (what indeed I might not without ſome reaſon expect, whether they appoint it or not) that all the profeſſors of divinity in the nation ſhall lecture one day every week upon this ſyſtem of moderation, that our youth may be trained up from their infancy in a taſte for it. This, I am ſure, will be much more profitable than any of the antiquated ſyſtems of divinity, as Pictet or Turretine; nay, I am perſuaded, it is more exactly calculated for the preſent times, than even the more modern authors, Epictetus and Marcus Antoninus, which laſt, in Mr Foulis's tranſlation, hath, by many young divines, in their firſt year, been miſtaken for Markii Medulla Theologiæ.

If this my treatiſe ſhall meet with the ſucceſs and acceptance that it juſtly deſerves, it is my intention to offer to the public a ſtill more minute and particular delineation of the moderate character, either in another book of a different form from this, or perhaps in a ſecond edition of the ſame; which ſhall in that caſe, be the text, and to which I will add large explanatory notes, containing much private hiſtory, and referring to many particular facts, in order to render it the more grateful, as well as the more inſtructing to the reader. I have alſo by me the *ſtamina vitæ* of many uſeful and edifying trea-

tiſes, which ſhall be produced in due time, as the muſes ſhall give aſſiſtance; ſuch as, The art of making a flouriſhed ſermon with very little matter, by a proper mixture of ſimiles, and by repeating every paragraph over again in the form of a ſoliloquy: One reſolution of all caſes of conſcience, from the good of the whole ſcheme: A directory for prayer, upon the ſame ſcheme: The horrid ſin and danger of miniſters ſpending too much time in catechiſing and viſiting in country-pariſhes; I do not make any mention of towns, to avoid giving offence; as alſo, leſt it ſhould prove true what I have heard, that the practice is ſcarcely known in any of our great towns, in which caſe, my reaſonings would look like beating the air. Theſe, with many others, I am with aſſiduous care purchaſing materials for completing, by obſervation and converſation, that our church may go on in a progreſſive motion toward the zenith of perfection and meridian of glory.

I ſhall now ſhut up this work, by acquainting the reader with a ſecret, which perhaps he would not otherwiſe advert to, *viz.* that I enjoy the pleaſure of having done a thing ſeemingly quite impracticable. I have given the moderate, and thoſe who deſire to be inſtructed in that ſcience, a complete view of the maxims and principles of moderation, without, at the ſame time proſtituting or giving them up to the poſſeſſion of every common reader. Perhaps ſome will aſk, how I imagine I have effected this? I anſwer, that I have ſo framed the whole of my book, that it is really intelligible only to perſons duly qualified; and to every ſuch perſon it is tranſparent as the ſpring-water. I have given only mo-

derate reaſons for moderate principles, ſo that however ſtrongly they may convince ſome, *viz.* thoſe of our kidney, others they will be ſo far from convincing, that they will be thought to operate a quite contrary way. I have managed this ſo carefully, that I could venture to lay a wager of all that I am worth, that this treatiſe ſhall be taken, by very many, to be the work of an orthodox pen, and to be intended as a banter upon moderate men and their way. They will be tempted to laugh at us, whom they will imagine to be expoſed by this revelation of our myſteries: but how ingeniouſly are they deceived? For, by that very means, every properly prejudiced mind is furniſhed with a complete ſyſtem, upon which to form his ſentiments, and regulate his conduct.

1763

# A SERIOUS APOLOGY

FOR THE

## ECCLESIASTICAL CHARACTERISTICS.

*By the real AUTHOR of that Performance.*

TO THE

# NOBILITY AND GENTRY

OF

# *SCOTLAND;*

PARTICULARLY,

SUCH OF THEM AS ARE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH, AND FREQUENTLY MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

*Right Honourable, and Right Worſhipful,*

THERE was prefixed to the Eccleſiaſtical Characteriſtics a ludicrous dedication; there ſeems therefore ſome propriety in prefixing a ſerious dedication to this Apology. To whom it ought to be addreſſed, could ſacrce admit of a moment's heſitation. It profeſſes to aim at promoting the intereſt of religion in the Church of Scotland; and certainly none have it ſo much in their power to preſerve or improve the conſtitution, both in church and ſtate, as your Lordſhips and Worſhips.

I am not to flatter you with an entire approbation of your paſt conduct as church-members. The deſign of this addreſs is rather to beſeech you, in the moſt reſpectful manner, ſeriouſly to conſider, whether you ought any longer to give countenance to the meaſures which have for ſome time generally prevailed. I am encouraged to this, by reflecting, that it is to you, indeed, we are obliged for ſetting ſome bounds to the attempts of the high-flying cler-

gy. I could give ſeveral inſtances of this; but ſhall only mention one, becauſe it is very recent. In the Aſſembly 1762, it was evidently owing to the honourable members, that a ſanction was not given to a reſolution, of inflicting cenſures upon miniſters merely for preaching to their own people at their deſire: a thing ſo odious in its appearance, and ſo dangerous as an example, that no circumſtances or ends to be ſerved by it, could poſſibly juſtify it.

I have already hinted, that you are moſt "able" to promote ſalutary meaſures in the church-courts; give me leave to add, that I firmly believe you will be firſt "willing" to make any change for the better. Individuals may, but, in the preſent ſtate of human nature, it ought not to be expected, that the majority of any body of men will give up private benefit in wealth, power, or eaſe, for public good. Therefore, when once the clergy are corrupted, their reformation can be looked for from the laity only, and not from themſelves. There is an obſervation to this purpoſe in the Rev. Dr. Robertſon's hiſtory, * which deſerves to be written in letters of gold: "They" (i. e. the Proteſtants) "applied to another aſſembly, to a convocation of the Popiſh clergy; but with the ſame ill ſucceſs which hath always attended every propoſal for reformation addreſſed to that order of men to abandon uſurped power, to renounce lucrative error is a ſacrifice, which the virtue of individuals has, on ſome occaſions, offered to truth: but from any ſociety of men, no ſuch effort can be expected. The corruptions of a ſociety, recommended by common

* Vol. I. p. 143.

utility, and juſtified by univerſal practice, are viewed by its members without ſhame or horror; and reformatiom never proceeds from themſelves, but is always forced upon them by ſome foreign hand." I am ſo much of that eminent writer's opinion, that I look upon every attempt for reviving the intereſt of religion as quite hopeleſs, unleſs you be pleaſed to ſupport it: and at the ſame time, am not without the ſtrongeſt expectation, that the period is faſt approaching, when you will ſee it neceſſary to interpoſe.

Will you indulge me in adding a fanciful reaſon for my hope. Many of you have been bred to the ſtudy of the law? Now I have obſerved in reading the New Teſtament, that it was a lawyer who took care of the body of our Saviour, after it had been crucified at the inſtigation of the prieſts. His name was Joſeph of Arimathea, "an honourable man and a counſellor," and the fact is recorded by all the four evangeliſts. Who knows therefore but the gentlemen of the ſame profeſſion among us may be the inſtruments of delivering the church, which is Chriſt's myſtical body, from the tyrannical impoſitions of churchmen in power?

Look into the hiſtory of this and every other church, and you will ſee that the laity never lent their influence to promote the ambition and ſecular greatneſs of eccleſiaſtics, but they received their reward in ingratitude and contempt. I have heard many of you praiſed as great friends to the church. By this is meant, that you have a friendſhip for, and are ready to increaſe the revenues and worldly convenience of thoſe who bear the ſacred office, who

are alſo called Clergy. I beg leave to obſerve, that the wiſeſt of mankind are ſometimes deceived by words, and patiently ſubmit to gradual and inſenſible uſurpations. Both the words *Clergy* and *Church* are an incroachment of the teachers upon you, and all the other hearers of the goſpel. The firſt of them comes from κλῆρος, which ſignifies inheritance, and when appropriated to miniſters, ſeems to intimate, that they alone are God's inheritance, while ſurely ſome of the people are as much his inheritance as they. The word *Church* is a Scripture phraſe, and is uſed about one hundred times in the New Teſtament. But of all theſe in not above one or two at moſt can it be pretended to ſignify the miniſters, excluſive of the people. Therefore if you be friends to the church, take the word in its proper and genuine ſenſe, and admit the people to a due proportion of your favour.

Far be it from me to blame thoſe who ſhew a friendſhip and attachment to miniſters, and wiſh to ſee them comfortably and decently provided for. This is highly neceſſary to free them from that anxiety and ſolicitude which is inſeparable from a poor and dependent ſtate. But why are they to be provided for at all? or why is it an amiable character to be a friend to the church? Surely that the great ends of their ſacred function may be promoted; that, freed from the neceſſity of attending to ſecular purſuits, they may have liberty to beſtow their time and pains for the ſpiritual benefit of thoſe committed to their care.

For this reaſon, I humbly intreat you, who, by your exalted ſtations, only can do it with ſucceſs,

to frown upon the luxurious and aſpiring, to encourage the humble and diligent clergyman. The intereſt of religion in this nation, is an object of the higheſt value in itſelf, and inſeparable from our temporal proſperity. On both accounts I hope it will be the object of your moſt tender care; and in return, may it pleaſe God to make you know to your happy experience, the truth of his own word, "Them that honour me, I will honour; but they that deſpiſe me, ſhall be lightly eſteemed."

I am, &c.

# A SERIOUS

# APOLOGY

FOR THE

# ECCLESIASTICAL CHARACTERISTICS.

THE Eccleſiaſtical Characteriſtics is evidently a ſatire upon clergymen of a certain character. It is a ſatire too, which every body muſt ſee was intended to carry in it no ſmall meaſure of keenneſs and ſeverity. This was to be expected from the nature and deſign of the performance. A ſatire that does not bite is good for nothing. Hence it neceſſarily follows, that it is eſſential to this manner of writing, to provoke and give offence. The greateſt ſatiriſts, in all ages, have made juſt as many enemies to themſelves, as they expoſed objects of ſcorn and deriſion to the public *. It was certainly, on this account, eaſy to foreſee, what would be the effect of the publication of ſuch a piece, if it was executed in a tolerable manner; and therefore I hope every impartial perſon will not only acquit me

* Hiſtory informs us, that Horace for his admired ſatires, had many private enemies in Rome; and it has been ſaid, that our countryman Mr Pope, durſt hardly walk the ſtreets of London, ſome years before his death, through fear of being attacked or piſtoled, even when he met with the higheſt encouragement from the public.

of blame, but confeſs I acted very prudently in not ſetting my name to the work.

The event juſtified this precaution. The rage and fury of many miniſters in Scotland when this pamphlet was firſt publiſhed, is known almoſt to all its readers. The moſt opprobrious names were beſtowed upon the concealed author, and the moſt dreadful threatenings uttered, in caſe they ſhould be ſo fortunate as to diſcover and convict him. One gentleman in particular, who fell under the imputation of being concerned in it, has ever ſince been the object of their deteſtation and reſentment; although I think it remains yet very uncertain, what hand he had, or whether he had any hand at all, in its compoſition; a queſtion which I hope the preſent production, by a compariſon with his other works, will enable the ſharp-ſighted public to determine.

But though I had by good management provided myſelf a ſhelter from the ſtorm, it is not to be ſuppoſed but I heard it well enough rattling over my head. The truth is, I have liſtened with all poſſible attention to the objections raiſed againſt this performance; and found with much concern, that the great endeavour of its enemies has been to repreſent the general deſign of it as contrary to the intereſt of religion; and the ſpirit and manner of it, as inconſiſtent with the Chriſtian temper. The common cry has been, "The author muſt be a man of a bad heart——No good man could write ſuch a piece." This has given me an irreſiſtible inclination, upon notice that a new edition of it is intended, to ſend into the world, at the ſame time, a ſerious

apology for it, not only for my own vindication, but that if it hath any capacity of doing good, this happy purpoſe may not be defeated by the implicit credit given to ſo heavy an accuſation.

In entering upon this taſk, I take the liberty to affirm, that what firſt induced me to write, was a deep concern for the declining intereſt of religion in the Church of Scotland, mixed with ſome indignation at what appeared to me a ſtrange abuſe of church-authority in the years 1751 and 1752 *. The reaſons of its particular ſtructure will be given afterwards; in the mean time, the reader may reſt aſſured, that this defence ſhall be wholly ſerious, and ſhall not contain a ſingle propoſition which, in its plain and literal meaning, the author does not believe to be true. Not ſo much as attempting to borrow any aſſiſtance from wit and ridicule, he ſubmits his cauſe to be tried by calm diſpaſſionate reaſoning, and only begs the impartial attention of the reader.

To free the queſtion from ambiguity, it will be neceſſary to conſider the performance diſtinctly, under the three following heads. 1. The ſubject of it in general; which is confeſſed to be an attack upon the principles, manners, and political conduct of certain clergymen. 2. Why it is written in an af-

* This refers to the rebuking and deposing ministers who did not think themselves at liberty to join in the ordination of a pastor without a people. The first was done in the case of Mr Adam and the presbytery of Linlithgow, who declined being present at the settlement of Torphichen; the second, in the case of Mr Gillespie, in the settlement of Inverkeithing.

ſumed character and ironical ſtyle. 3. What occaſion was given for it by thoſe to whom it was evidently applied, *viz.* the miniſters of our own church.

1. Let us conſider the ſubject in general, *viz.* attacking and expoſing the characters of clergymen. While I am ſpeaking upon this head, I muſt take it for granted, that the faults are real; that the ſatire and reproofs are juſt. An objection againſt the performance has been often made to this purpoſe: "Suppoſing the things cenſured to be true, what end does it ſerve to publiſh them?—If tenderneſs for the reputation of the offenders could not prevent ſuch cruel treatment, ought not a regard for the edification of others, and the ſucceſs of the goſpel in their hand, to have diſpoſed a good man to throw a veil over their infirmities? Is not religion wounded through their ſides, and occaſion given to infidels to triumph?"

In anſwer to this, I confeſs myſelf to have very different views of things from thoſe who ſpeak in this manner. Nay, I believe, that though there are ſome who ſpeak as they think, yet it is much more frequently the language of thoſe who wiſh nothing ſo much as the undiſturbed indulgence of themſelves in ſloth, luxury, or groſſer crimes. I am altogether at a loſs to know what is the argument in reaſon, or the precept in Scripture, which makes it criminal to cenſure miniſters when they deſerve it. That their ſtation like that of all other perſons of influence, or in public employment, ſhould make men very tender and cautious how they take up an evil report againſt them, and careful never to do it but on good grounds, I readily allow; but where the character is really

bad, I hold it as a firſt principle, that as it is in them doubly criminal and doubly pernicious, ſo it ought to be expoſed with double ſeverity. This is ſo far from being contrary to the intereſts of religion, even when done by a clergyman, that nothing can be more honourable to it, than to ſhew that there are ſome ſo bold as to reprove, and ſo faithful as to withſtand the corruptions of others. How far ſecret wickedneſs ſhould be concealed, or ſcenes of iniquity not laid open, and ſo ſin turned into ſcandal in miniſters, is a matter that would require a very careful and accurate diſquiſition, and admits of many exceptions: but if, in any caſe, erroneous doctrine, or degeneracy of life, is plain and viſible, to render them completely odious, muſt certainly be a duty. When it is not done, it provokes men to conclude the clergy all combined together, like "Demetrius and the craftſmen," and more concerned for their own power and credit, than for the intereſt and benefit of thoſe committed to their charge.

That irreligion and infidelity has made a rapid progreſs among us for ſome time paſt, is a certain, and a melancholy truth. Well, perhaps I ſhall be told, That I have contributed to ſtrengthen the cauſe of infidelity among the quality and gentry, by giving them ſuch a repreſentation of the clergy. I anſwer, That gentlemen's forming a bad opinion of clergymen contributes to promote infidelity, I will by no means deny; ſo far from it, I affirm, that without this, all other cauſes put together, would not be able to produce it in any great degree. The great, as well as the vulgar, are always more influenced in their regard for, or contempt of religion, by what they

ſee in the characters and behaviour of men, than by any ſpeculative reaſonings whatever. This is what they themſelves make no ſcruple, on many occaſions, to confeſs. Biſhop Burnet, in his Diſcourſe of the Paſtoral Care, acquaints us, that, "having had much free converſation with many that have been fatally corrupted that way, they have very often owned, that nothing promoted this ſo much in them as the bad opinion which they took up of clergymen. They did not ſee in them," ſays he, "that ſtrictneſs of life, that contempt of the world, that zeal, that meekneſs, humility and charity, that diligence and earneſtneſs, with relation to the great truths of the Chriſtian religion, which they reckoned they would moſt certainly have, if they themſelves firmly believed it; therefore they concluded, that thoſe whoſe buſineſs it was more ſtrictly to inquire into the truth of their religion, knew that it was not ſo certain as they themſelves, for other ends endeavoured to make the world believe it was."

But the great, or rather the only queſtion yet remains: Did the publication of the Characteriſtics give the firſt occaſion to ſuch reflections in Scotland? Was the firſt information gentlemen had of the characters of the clergy drawn from that performance? This, which muſt be the very foundation of the objection we are conſidering, is not true: and indeed it is not poſſible, in the nature of things, that it ſhould be true. If there be any ſuch thing as corruption among the clergy, by neglect of duty, luxury in dreſs or table, laxneſs in principle, or licentiouſneſs of practice, it can be no ſecret to people of figure and faſhion. It is commonly in

their ſociety that the moſt free converſation and unclerical carriage is found among gentlemen of the ſacred order. And though ſome of the laity who regret ſuch indecencies, may have ſo much good manners as to forbear upbraiding them openly, and others may perhaps not be diſpleaſed at the removal of all reſtraints, either from the diſcipline or example of miniſters, yet it is well known how little to their advantage perſons of both ſorts have talked, long before the Characteriſtics had a being. So that, inſtead of any public rebuke being the occaſion of gentlemen's forming a bad opinion of the clergy, the laſt, on the contrary, gave a manifeſt occaſion for the firſt, if it did not make ſomething of that kind indiſpenſably neceſſary.

Many wrong opinions ariſe from confounding things that have ſome relation to one another, but are notwithſtanding eſſentially diſtinct. Thus what ought really to be imputed to the crime, is frequently imputed to the puniſhment. Becauſe a bad opinion of the clergy leads men to infidelity, therefore, ſay ſome, cover their failings, and palliate their crimes: to expoſe them is doing hurt to religion. On the contrary, I reckon it is far more concluſive to ſay, Becauſe the bad characters of the clergy are extremely hurtful to religion, let them be told, that the greateſt ſtrictneſs and purity of manners is expected from them; and if any will not comply, let the guilty perſons be chaſtiſed, that the honour of the order may be preſerved. I was never better pleaſed with a ſtory than one I have read of the late Duke of Orleans, regent of France. It happened, that during his regency, one of the

French princes of the blood was convicted of committing robbery on the highway. Great interceſſion was made with the regent, to ſave him from the ignominy of a public execution, which, it was alledged, would be an indelible ſtain upon the royal blood. To this the Duke replied, The royal blood is indeed deeply ſtained, but it was ſtained by the commiſſion of the crime; the puniſhment will only ſerve to waſh out the ſtain as far as that is now poſſible.

Chriſtians may, if they pleaſe, learn what ought to be their own conduct, by obſerving the contrary conduct of infidels, who generally underſtand what is the real intereſt of that unhappy cauſe. It is of no conſequence to an infidel to make it appear that there are ſome miniſters bad men. His great buſineſs is, to transfer the faults of particulars to the whole order, and to inſinuate, that "prieſts of all religions are the ſame." This appears from the general ſtrain of their writings and converſation. Neither is it uncommon to ſee infidels, who on all occaſions diſcover the moſt rancorous malice againſt miniſters of the goſpel in general, maintain the greateſt intimacy with ſome particulars of that denomination. Whether their friendſhip is an honour or diſgrace to the perſon ſo diſtinguiſhed, I think is not difficult to determine. However, in oppoſition to this conduct, every real Chriſtian, while he maintains upon his mind the deepeſt ſenſe of the importance and uſefulneſs of the ſacred office, ſhould, at the ſame time, hold in deteſtation thoſe who, by an unworthy behaviour, expoſe it to contempt.

That I am not ſingular in this opinion, appears

from the hiſtory of the Chriſtian church in every age. Were it not that it might be conſidered as an unneceſſary oſtentation of learning, I could eaſily ſhew, from almoſt every writer renowned for piety and worth, with what boldneſs and ſeverity they treated the corrupt clergy of their own times. And what is remarkable, though their characters have now received a ſanction from their antiquity, and indeed a luſtre from this very zeal and fidelity; yet while they lived, their invectives were conſtantly complained of by the indolent or vicious of their contemporaries, as injurious to the intereſts of religion. That this was the caſe at the reformation, may be eaſily ſeen by any who will look but a little into the writings of that age.——In our neighbour country, when Mr Richard Baxter wrote his Gildas Salvianus, or, Reformed Paſtor, which contained a very plain and very ſevere reprehenſion of his brethren the clergy, the ſame objection was made againſt the publication of it, at leaſt in the Engliſh language, by ſome prudent ſofteners. To this he anſwers, among other things, as follows: "When the ſin is open in the ſight of the world, it is in vain to attempt to hide it; and ſuch attempts will but aggravate it, and increaſe our ſhame. If the miniſters of England had ſinned only in Latin, I would have made ſhift to have admoniſhed them in Latin; but if they will ſin in Engliſh, they muſt hear it in Engliſh. Unpardoned ſin will never let us reſt, though we be at ever ſo much care and coſt to cover it. Our ſin will ſurely find us out, though we find not it. And if he that confeſſeth and forſaketh be the man that ſhall have mercy, no wonder then if he that covereth it proſper not.

If we be ſo tender of ourſelves, and loth to confeſs, God will be leſs tender of us, and indite our confeſſions for us.—Too many that have ſet their hand to this ſacred work, do ſo obſtinately proceed in ſelf-ſeeking, negligence, and pride, &c. that it is become our neceſſary duty to admoniſh them. If we could ſee that ſuch would reform without reproof, we could gladly forbear the publiſhing of their faults: but when reproofs thèmſelves do prove ſo ineffectual, that they are more offended at the reproof, than at the ſin, and had rather that we ſhould ceaſe reproving, than themſelves ſhould ceaſe ſinning, I think it is time to ſharpen the remedy."

I ſhall produce but one example more, to which I beg the attention of thoſe who have been inadvertently taught to think that one who endeavours to expoſe the characters of the clergy cannot be a good man. Does not all hiſtory bear teſtimony to the learning, piety, and worth of the gentlemen of the Port-royal, a ſociety of Janſeniſts, who, a little more than a hundred years ago, made a moſt violent attack upon the Jeſuits in France; particularly M. Paſcal, in his Provincial Letters, which are written almoſt entirely in the way of wit and humour. Theſe pieces are ſtill univerſally admired; nor are they at this time counted any objection to his character for piety and integrity. At the time of publication, however, the very ſame objections which are now made to the Characteriſtics, were made to his writings *.

* This any man may see, who will look at his eleventh letter, and some of the subsequent ones, as well as the notes on them, which are generally ascribed to Mr Arnauld.

The reader may poſſibly recollect, that I hinted above, a ſuſpicion, that many are not ſincere in offering this objection. One reaſon for this ſuſpicion I am almoſt aſhamed to mention, for the reproach which it brings, in my apprehenſion, upon many members of the church of Scotland; but as it is well known, it is unneceſſary to conceal it, and in my own defence I am entitled to repeat it. There have been, within theſe few years, writings publiſhed in Scotland directly levelled againſt religion itſelf, taking away the very foundations of morality, treating our Redeemer's name with contempt and deriſion, and bringing in doubt the very being of a God. Writings of this kind have been publicly avowed, and the names of the authors prefixed. Now, where has been the zeal of the enemies of the Characteriſtics againſt ſuch writings? Have they moved for the exerciſe of diſcipline againſt the writers? Have they ſupported the motion when made by others? Are not books in oppoſition to the goſpel, and abuſing all clergymen, as ſuch, more contrary to the intereſt of religion, than one which only impeaches the fidelity of a part of that order, from at leaſt a profeſſed concern for the honour of the whole? Does not this tempt men to ſay, as was ſaid an age ago by Moliere in France, or by ſome one there, on occaſion of a play of his called the Tartuffe, That a man may write what he pleaſeth againſt God Almighty, in perfect ſecurity; but if he write againſt the characters of the clergy in power, he is ruined for ever.

Another reaſon why I ſuſpect the ſincerity of the enemies of the Characteriſtics, when they pretend

a regard for the intereſt of religion as the ground of their diſpleaſure, is, that it hath often happened, that both ſpeakers and writers have charged another party of the miniſters of the church of Scotland with hypocriſy and deceit, the moſt villainous of all characters; and yet it never occurred to theſe gentlemen, that ſuch a charge was hurtful to the intereſt of religion. I am now to let the reader into a ſecret. What very much contributed, or rather indeed what chiefly brought me to a reſolution of publiſhing the Characteriſtics, was a pamphlet publiſhed a few months before it, called, A juſt view of the conſtitution of the church of Scotland. This univerſal uncontradicted fame attributed to the late Dr H——n; and the expreſs purpoſe of it is, to repreſent a certain ſet of miniſters, as agitators of the people, and in general, as not acting upon conſcience, even where they pretend it, but from a love of popularity. Beſides this he tells a ſtory, which he calls a "ſcene of iniquity," with the initial letters of the names of the perſons ſuppoſed to be guilty. Was ever this pamphlet charged by my enemies as contrary to the intereſt of religion? It will not be pretended. Now, I ſhould be glad to know, what it is that makes the diſcovery of a ſcene of iniquity, when committed by ſome whom I muſt not name, contrary to the intereſt of religion, but the diſcovery of a ſcene of iniquity committed by certain others, no way contrary to it at all? I am not able to find any reaſon for this difference of judgment but one, which is not very honourable to them, *viz.* That perhaps ſcenes of iniquity ſuppoſed to be committed by them, are more probable

in themſelves, and actually obtain more credit, than thoſe which they alledge againſt others. I do not affirm that this is the reaſon: but I think, ſince they had been the aggreſſors, both in cenſuring miniſters for ſcrupling obedience to their unconſtitutional deciſions, and attacking their characters in print; if ſome nameleſs author thought fit to retaliate the injury in the laſt kind, and did it with ſo great ſucceſs, they ought to have lain as quiet under it as poſſible, both from equity and prudence; from equity, becauſe they had given the provocation; and from prudence, becauſe in fact their conduct tempted many to ſay, the charge muſt have been juſt, or it would have been treated with contempt; the ſtroke muſt have been well aimed, the wound muſt have been very deep, ſince the ſcar continues ſo long, and is never like to be either forgotten or forgiven.

This, however, is in itſelf but of ſmall moment. It would be of little conſequence whether their conduct had been reaſonable and conſiſtent or not, if the objection itſelf were juſt. But I hope it appears very clearly, from what I have offered above, that ſuppoſing the conduct of the clergy to be unbecoming their profeſſion, a regard to religion not only permits, but loudly calls for a ſevere reprehenſion of it. This is agreeable to the ſentiments and practice of the wiſeſt and beſt men in every age. There have been indeed a few exceptions: but the lenity which ſome excellent perſons have ſhewn to the vices of the clergy, has been generally reckoned among their weakneſſes and not their virtues. I mention this, leſt it ſhould come into any perſon's

mind, what is related of Conſtantine the Great, *viz.* That when he received a bundle of papers, which he was told contained accuſations againſt the vicious part of the clergy, he publicly burnt them, after having taken an oath, that he did not know what they contained: and added, that though he ſhould ſee a biſhop in the very act of a crime that ſhall be nameleſs in Engliſh *, he would cover him with his purple. If the account be true, and this be the charity which ſome plead for with ſo great earneſtneſs, one can hardly help crying out, O Emperor, great was thy charity!

2. According to the diſtribution I made of my ſubject, the next point is, To account for the Characteriſtics being written in an aſſumed character and ironical ſtyle. "If concern for the intereſt of religion prompted you," ſay ſome, "to attack the characters of the clergy, why was it not done in a ſerious way? Would it not have been better, gravely to have convicted them of their ſin, and warned them of their danger, than to ſet them in a ridiculous point of light, and expoſe them to the public ſcorn?" This objection, I am ſenſible, made an impreſſion on ſome well-meaning perſons; and therefore it will be neceſſary to conſider it with care. A very good man, when he firſt read the Characteriſtics, expreſſed himſelf thus: "Alas! if there was occaſion given for it, would it not have been better to have had recourſe to prayer than to ſatire?" In general, I humbly apprehend, there is no oppoſition between theſe two means: and therefore, in many caſes, it is proper to employ both. Let me

* Alienum torum labefactantem.

therefore intreat the attention of the reader, while I briefly conſider, *firſt*, the lawfulneſs of employing ridicule in ſuch a cauſe; and *ſecondly*, what particular circumſtances concurred to render it the moſt proper method, if not in a manner neceſſary, in the inſtance before us.

That it is a lawful thing to employ ridicule in ſuch a cauſe, is evident from the very higheſt authority. There are many inſtances of irony in the ſacred writings. In the third chapter of Geneſis, ver. 22. we have an expreſſion uſed by God himſelf which interpreters do generally ſuppoſe to be in irony: and as it is of the moſt ſevere and penetrating kind, in a moſt deplorable calamity, ſo I cannot well imagine what other rational meaning can be put upon the words: "And the Lord God ſaid, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." It muſt be remembered, that Adam had broken his Maker's command, from a fooliſh expectation, upon the devil's promiſe, of becoming like God. On this, an ancient interpreter ſays, "Adam deſerved to be derided in this manner, and he was made more deeply ſenſible of his folly by this ironical expreſſion, than by any other that could have been uſed." The conduct of Elijah, and his treatment of the prophets of Baal, is another known example of the ſame kind. It is recorded, 1 Kings xviii. 27. "And it came to paſs at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and ſaid, Cry aloud: for he is a god, either he is talking, or he is purſuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he ſleepeth and muſt be awaked."

There are ſeveral inſtances of the ſame manner

of ſpeaking in the prophetical books; particularly, the prophet Iſaiah, in an admirable manner, and at great length, expoſes the ſootiſh folly of idolaters. The paſſages are well known; as are alſo ſome in the apoſtolic writings; and therefore I omit them for the ſake of brevity: and only mention an expreſſion of our Saviour himſelf, who, though a man of ſorrows, and in a ſtate of humiliation, yet in ſome places uſes a language plainly ironical; as in John x. 32. "Many good works have I ſhewed you from my Father; for which of theſe works do ye ſtone me?" It was certainly making them very ridiculous, to aſk them, for which of his good works they propoſed to ſtone him, as well as it was the ſtrongeſt way of ſignifying that he had never done any works among them but ſuch as were good.

After theſe examples, none will be ſurpriſed when I ſay, that the moſt grave and venerable of the fathers have not only wrote in this manner themſelves, but aſſerted its neceſſity and uſe. To be convinced of this, let any man only read St. Jerome in his letters, and his writings againſt Jovian and the Pelagians; Tertullian, in his apology againſt the folly of idolaters; Auguſtine, Irenæus, and Bernard, and many others of the moſt approved characters. It is indeed founded upon the plaineſt reaſon.—There is commonly a pride and ſelf-ſufficiency in men under the dominion of error, which makes them deaf to advice, and impregnable to grave and ſerious reaſoning: neither is there any getting at them till their pride is levelled a little by this diſmaying weapon. But leſt the reader ſhould be leſs willing to yield to

my reaſoning than that of greater men, I ſhall beg leave to tranſlate three paſſages from three different writers in diſtant ages, which could not be more applicable to the times in which they lived, than they are to my preſent purpoſe.

The firſt is from Tertullian: "That which I have done, is nothing elſe but a play before the real combat. I have rather pointed out the wounds which might be given you, than given them in effect. If there are places which oblige people to laugh, it is becauſe the ſubjects themſelves are ridiculous. There are many things which ought to be treated with contempt and mockery, through fear of giving them weight, and making them important by ſeriouſly debating them. Nothing is more juſtly due to vanity than deriſion; and it belongs to the truth to ſmile, becauſe it is chearful, and to deſpiſe its enemies, becauſe it is aſſured of victory. It is true, we ought to be careful that the raillery be not low, and unworthy of the truth; but if that be attended to, and one can uſe it with addreſs and delicacy, it is a duty to do ſo."

The ſecond paſſage is from St. Auguſtine, in the following words: "Who will dare to ſay, that the truth ought to remain defenceleſs againſt the attacks of falſehood? That the enemies of religion ſhall be permitted to terrify the faithful with ſtrong words, and to entice or ſeduce them by agreeable turns of wit; but that believers ought never to write but with ſuch a coldneſs of ſtyle as to lull the reader aſleep?"

The third paſſage is from Paſcal, in the eleventh of his Provincial Letters: "As the truths of the

goſpel are the proper objects both of love and reſpect, ſo the errors which are oppoſite to them are the objects both of hatred and contempt. There are two diſtinct qualities in the firſt, a divine beauty which renders them amiable, and a ſacred majeſty which renders them venerable; there are alſo in the laſt, a guilt and impiety which renders them horrible, and a deluſion and folly which renders them ſilly and contemptible. Wherefore, as the ſaints have always, for truth, the united affections of love and fear; ſo, for error, they have alſo the correſpondent ſentiments of hatred and contempt. Their zeal equally diſpoſes them to reſiſt the malice of bad men with boldneſs and courage, and to diſcredit their folly by deriſion and ſcorn."

That it is lawful in ſome caſes to uſe ridicule, I hope is now ſufficiently proved. The truth is, though it is common and natural for men to cry out, That this is an unbecoming manner of handling the ſubject, when their own miſtakes are expoſed; yet I have met with very few controverſial writers, who do not, in proportion to their ſkill, endeavour to enliſt ridicule in the ſervice of reaſon. It is often indeed a ſorry and motley mixture of grave and comic; but it ſufficiently ſhews the natural ſenſe men have of the propriety, not only of contradicting what is falſe, but ſmiling at what is abſurd: I might therefore very juſtly reſt my defence here. It was, in the *firſt* place, my buſineſs to judge, whether there was ſufficient occaſion given for ſuch an attempt, as well as, whether I was endowed with proper talents for the execution. After this, it fell of courſe to the

readers to determine, how far I had judged right in either, or both of these particulars.

But as, in fact, it was not merely the lawfulness of the thing in general, nor any confidence of my own untried ability in that way of writing, that determined me to make choice of it, but some particular circumstances that seemed to render it necessary, I shall now take the liberty of laying them before the reader. The first of them is the reigning taste of the age. Nothing is more plain, than that a certain levity of mind prevails at present among all ranks; which makes it very hard to fix their attention on any thing that is serious. The very title of a grave discourse is sufficient to disgust many, and to prevent them from ever inquiring what it contains: so that though I resolve to adhere to my promise at first setting out, I am this moment writing with but little hope, that above one twentieth part of the readers of my former treatise will vouchsafe it a perusal. Nay, it is ten to one that many will deny this to be the work of the former author; and affirm, that it is greatly inferior in point of style; that is to say, no style appears to them just or pure, but that which is humorous and poignant.

Besides levity, or an aversion to what is serious, there is another characteristic of the present age, which is perhaps the child of the former; I mean sloth, or an unwillingness to bestow great or long application of mind upon any subject, be it what it will. This disposition has been wonderfully gratified, and wonderfully increased by the generality of writers among us for some time past. The authors of periodical publications, such as reviews, maga-

zines, and even common newſpapers, for their own intereſt, have long vied with one another in the variety and livelineſs of the pieces which make up their ſeveral collections. From peruſing theſe, it is ſo eaſy to get a little ſuperficial knowledge of every ſubject, that few look any further for the means of forming their opinions in religion, government, or learning. Another ſpecies of compoſition, proceeding upon the ſame principles, is novel-writing. What an inundation of theſe we have had theſe twenty years paſt in Great Britain, is ſufficiently known. It would even be an entertainment to enumerate them by their titles, and ſee what proportion they make of the whole new books in any given period of time.

From theſe circumſtances, it is eaſy to ſee what an intending author muſt have before his eyes. Thoſe who have long had their appetites quickened by a variety of diſhes, and the moſt pleaſing ſauces, are not able to reliſh plainer, though, to thoſe who can uſe it, far better and more ſolid food. This made it neceſſary for me to fall upon a method of compoſition which might have ſome chance to procure the attention of the public; and I could think of none more proper than irony; which, when well executed, is almoſt univerſally pleaſing. Beſides, I muſt acknowledge, that the conduct of the prevailing party did often appear to me in a very ridiculous light; and never more ſo, than when the Characteriſtics were publiſhed. Moderation had been long a faſhionable or cant phraſe among them; and yet they were running headlong into the moſt violent and tyrannical meaſures. They made great pretences to charity, and a large manner of think-

ing; and as a teſtimony of it, very modeſtly ſuppoſed, that all who did not form the ſame opinions in religion and government with themſelves, were weak ſilly fools, except two or three knaves who had the direction of the reſt. This, I do affirm, was not barely hinted, but openly and confidently aſſerted; ſo that I never knew greater bigots, in the proper and genuine ſenſe of that word. How far my attempt would be ſucceſsful, could only be gueſſed at; but I imagined, that if I could exhibit them to the public in the ſame light in which they appeared to myſelf, they would make a pretty comical figure: and ſo it happened in fact. My firſt intention was only to have publiſhed, in May 1753, a half ſheet, containing the maxims themſelves, under the title of, "A liſt of ſelf-evident truths:" but that having been neglected, upon the provocation hinted at above, the illuſtrations were added, and ſent abroad a few months afterwards, in the form they now bear.

Another circumſtance which ſeemed to render this way of writing neceſſary, was the little regard that had been paid to ſeveral well written treatiſes of a ſerious kind. The perſons chiefly pointed at in the Characteriſtics had greatly relaxed diſcipline in point of morals; had, by a courſe of deciſions, planted the country with uſeleſs miniſters; and though the whole office of ordination proceeds upon the ſuppoſition of a call from the people, gravely admitted them without any call at all. This, when done as a part of the public worſhip of God, as it always is, muſt be conſidered by every impartial perſon, not only as a piece of groſs abſurdity, and mocking of the people, but a piece of flagrant impiety, and mock-

ing of God. Conſcientious miniſters abſented themſelves from theſe pretended ordinations; till at laſt it came into the heads of their enemies to force them to be preſent under pain of the higheſt cenſures of the church. They had the hardineſs all the while to affirm, that this was abſolutely neceſſary to ſupport the conſtitution: although every man muſt agree, that if any of our fathers, who lived about fifty years ago, were to riſe up out of his grave, he would ſay, it was the conſtitution turned upſide down. Many attempts had been made to reaſon with them, and clear appeals to the hiſtory and ſtanding acts of the church; but all were trodden under foot by the deciſions of the annual aſſemblies, in their judicative capacity. Nay, they at laſt became ſo confident of their own power, and ſo deaf to all reaſoning on the ſubject, that they refuſed even to read what was written by thoſe of different ſentiments, and when they did read it, diſdained to make any anſwer to it, or attempt to convince them any other way, than by the unanſwerable argument of depoſition. This induced me to write in a manner that has obliged them to hear whether they will or not; and though it has not been ſo happy as to bring them to conviction, I am ſure it was no more than well merited correction.

One other reaſon I ſhall mention for making choice of this way of writing, was drawn from the modern notions of philoſophy, which had ſo greatly contributed to the corruption of the clergy. The great patron and advocate for theſe was Lord Shafteſbury, one of whoſe leading principles it is, that "Ridicule is the teſt of truth." This principle of

his had been adopted by many of the clergy; and there is hardly any man converſant in the literary world, who has not heard it a thouſand times defended in converſation. I was therefore willing to try how they themſelves could ſtand the edge of this weapon; hoping, that if it did not convince them of the folly of the other parts of their conduct, it might at leaſt put them out of conceit with this particular opinion. The laſt of theſe I do really think the publication of the Characteriſtics has, in a great meaſure, effected; at leaſt within my narrow ſphere of converſation. It is but ſeldom we now hear it pretended, that ridicule is the teſt of truth. If they have not renounced this opinion, they at leaſt keep it more to themſelves, and are leſs inſolent upon it in their treatment of others.

I hope the reader will not imagine, that, by wreſting this principle out of the hands of my adverſaries, I intend to adopt it myſelf. There may be truth in it in an equivocal ſenſe; for to be ſure nothing that is true can be really ridiculous: but there are few things more pernicious than this principle, as it is commonly underſtood and applied. It is moſt certain, that many things both true and excellent may, by a perſon poſſeſſed of the talent of humour, be made apparently ridiculous; and this will have its full effect upon the bulk of mankind, who are not able to diſcover where the fallacy lies. Dr Brown, in his Eſſays on the Characteriſtics, ſays with great propriety, That ridicule is not fitted for the diſcovery of truth; for, ſo far as it is diſtinguiſhed from reaſoning, it "is only putting imagination in the place of reaſon;" than which few

things are more ready to lead us aſtray. But he allows, that it is very proper to "diſgrace known falſehood;" and as the application of it to this purpoſe is warranted by the judgment and example of the beſt and wiſeſt men in all ages, there was nothing to hinder me from making uſe of the ſame privilege. In the mean time, if there has been any character of real worth, or any meaſure truly commendable, ridiculed in the treatiſe now under conſideration, let this be ſhown by clear and plain deductions of reaſon, and I am ready to repent of it, and renounce it.

3. This leads me to the third and laſt part of my defence, *viz.* To ſhow what occaſion was given for ſuch a treatiſe among us. This I confeſs to be abſolutely neceſſary, as it is plainly applied, in the title-page, to the church of Scotland. It will be in vain to have ſhown, that there is nothing ſinful or hurtful in attacking the characters of clergymen, where they act in a manner unworthy of their office, or that this may lawfully be done even in the way of ridicule. The queſtion will ſtill be, Have the miniſters of the Church of Scotland really deſerved it? Very great difficulties, however, preſent themſelves in this branch of the ſubject. There are many things demonſtrably true, which it is dangerous to affirm, at leaſt in ſome places. Upon the ſuppoſition, that the prevailing party in this church is of the ſpirit and diſpoſition painted in the Characteriſtics, one would think, a man who ſhould upbraid them with their faults in a direct manner, would be in a ſorry ſituation if ever they ſhould be his judges. The *veritas convitii* would do him very lit-

tle ſervice, or rather would only ſerve to envenom their reſentment. Have they been already ſo enraged againſt me for a little pleaſant raillery? and am I ſo mad as to hope to defend myſelf, by bringing againſt the ſame perſons a ſerious and deliberate accuſation? However formidable this difficulty may appear, I am not without hopes, that ſuch of them as have any meaſure of impartiality and candour, after weighing what is now to be offered, may be more inclined to forgive the attack already made; and, by breaking their attachment to the moſt corrupt members, recover the merit and dignity of the general body.

With this view let me make a preliminary remark. Many from the beginning either really did, or at leaſt affected to ſuppoſe, that all who joined in the meaſures carried on by the majority in our general aſſemblies, were repreſented in the Characteriſtics, as infected with every bad principle or practice ſatirized through the whole. Nothing was farther from the writer's mind. An anſwer to that objection, ſuch as the nature of the performance would admit, was inſerted in the preface to the ſecond edition of the book itſelf; and I ſhall now deliver my judgment upon the point, without the leaſt ambiguity. The political meaſures which have been carrying on for theſe thirty years paſt in the church of Scotland, appear to me to be ruinous to the intereſts of religion. At the ſame time, I am ſenſible, that there are many worthy and good men who join in moſt of thoſe meaſures; and one great end of the Characteriſtics was, to open the eyes of ſuch perſons, both on their employment and company.

A train of circumſtances, not always in our own

power, ſometimes leads good men themſelves to ſupport the moſt corrupt part of a church in their public meaſures. The boundaries of prudence and zeal are not eaſily fixed. Union of opinion in politics, often eſtabliſhes a connection between men of very oppoſite principles in religion and morals: and there are few greater inſtances of the weakneſs of human nature, than the readineſs of men to give protection and countenance to thoſe who are worſe than themſelves, becauſe they are ſtaunch friends to their party views. Such complacency do ſome take in this, as an exertion of Chriſtian charity and tenderneſs, that it is wonderful to think what they will do, and much more wonderful that they are not aſhamed of it, but openly, and to all appearance honeſtly defend it.

Whatever unites them with one party, alienates their affection from, and interrupts their correſpondence with the oppoſite: hence extremes are produced on both hands. Perſons of fierce and violent tempers, in their zeal, throw out indiſcriminate reflections; and thoſe engaged in another intereſt, turn a deaf ear to every accuſation, as the mere effect of party-malice and reſentment. Nay, it has been obſerved, that it is ſomewhat natural for clergymen, to be more eaſily irritable at ſuch of their brethern as riſe above them in apparent concern for religion, and zeal for promoting it, than at thoſe who fall below them. The firſt are a reproach to their own conduct and character, the other are a foil to it. So that every one who eſpouſes any bold or vigorous meaſure, may lay his account with a ſenſible coldneſs, even from ſuch

of his brethren as are in the next immediate degree below him.

Another very conſiderable difficulty lies in my way. The more the complaint of degeneracy in the church of Scotland is juſt, the more difficult, in one reſpect, it will be to carry a conviction of it to the minds, either of thoſe who are guilty of it, or thoſe who obſerve it. The corruption of a church always implies, a light ſenſe of the evil of ſin, and therefore, however plainly I may make it appear, that ſuch and ſuch facts are done, it will be hard to convince many that they are wrong, at leaſt in any great degree. Many a clergyman will not yield the one half of thoſe things to be ſins that were admitted to be ſo a century ago; nor do they ſee the one half of the evil of ſin, either in clergy or laity, that was once taken for granted. Thoſe who have not the ſame ideas of morality, can never be ſuppoſed to have an equal impreſſion of the inſufficiency of the ſame degree of it. Thoſe who look upon family-worſhip, for inſtance, as an unneceſſary piece of devotion, will never be brought to imagine, that an aſſembly is one whit worſe for conſiſting of ſo many members who habitually neglect that duty, if I may be permitted to uſe ſo old-faſhioned a phraſe. On the other hand, though I ſhould produce the names and ſirnames of thoſe clergy, who, mounted upon their courſers at the public races, join the gentlemen of the turf, and are well ſkilled in all the terms of that honourable art: though I ſhould name thoſe who are to be found at routs and drums, and other polite aſſemblies of the ſame nature, and can deſcant with greater clearneſs on the laws of the gaming-

table than the Bible, inſtead of being commanded to produce a proof of the facts, I ſhould expect to find many who denied the relevancy of the crimes.

For this reaſon, before we go farther, perhaps it will not be improper to introduce a general obſervation. If we conſider the circumſtances of the church of Scotland, we may, from a knowledge of human nature, and the experience of paſt ages, ſafely affirm, ſhe is in a lax and degenerate ſtate. If it were not ſo, it would be a miracle. Nay, I will venture to go further, and to ſay, it would be ſuch a miracle as never happened before. We in this church have enjoyed uninterrupted outward proſperity for more than ſeventy years; and during all that time, have not only been free from perſecution, but have enjoyed the favour and protection of the civil power. If this long courſe of temporal proſperity has had no effect in bringing on a depravation of our manners, it muſt needs be a miracle; becauſe it is contrary to the natural courſe of things; and he that will pretend to find a period, when any ſuch thing happened before, will, I am confident be unſucceſsful. The primitive church was never long without perſecution during the three firſt centuries; yet they had a trial how they could bear proſperity, in the interval between the ninth and tenth perſecution, immediately before that dreadful one which they ſuffered under the Emperor Diocleſian. And hiſtory informs us, that though they had not then any civil eſtabliſhment, yet the eaſe and proſperity which they enjoyed had a moſt fatal influence upon their manners.

So long as a miniſter is only in the poſt of great-

eſt danger, there will be leſs hazard of worldly men endeavouring to puſh themſelves into that ſituation: but as ſoon as that office begins to be conſidered as a quiet and ſafe ſettlement for this life, how can it be but many, from no higher end than worldly intereſt, will get and keep poſſeſſion of it? Therefore, though I were living in Japan, and knew nothing elſe of the church of Scotland, but that ſhe had enjoyed ſuch a courſe of outward proſperity, I would as certainly conclude, that a corruption of manners was affecting even the clergy, as I would that iron which had been long out of the furnace, and had not been rubbed or ſcoured, would be growing ruſty.

After all, it is ſomewhat ſtrange, that this performance ſhould ſtand in need of an apology, or that the accuſation againſt it ſhould be ſo often repeated, 'That the author muſt be a bad man; and that it is hurtful to the intereſt of religion. This is certainly the clamour of the guilty, and not the judgment of the candid. There is no ſuch apprehenſion of the thing being criminal among thoſe who are the moſt unprejudiced and impartial judges; I mean the laity. It is well known, with how much approbation it was read by them, when firſt publiſhed; and notwithſtanding the love of defamation, which is natural to mankind, I am perſuaded its admirers would have been of quite a different claſs than they generally were, if it had been againſt the intereſt of religion; and that it would have had no admirers at all, if it had been a ſatire without an object.

Let us ſuppoſe any perſon had taken into his head to write a ſatire againſt the miniſters of the

church of Scotland, and had thought proper to repreſent them in an oppoſite light; ſuppoſe he had repreſented them as having arrived to ſuch a degree of bigotry, as to believe, that no perſon could be ſaved who had the leaſt doubt of any thing contained in the large ſyſtems of Pictet and Turretine; as ſo ſevere diſciplinarians, that they were continually harraſſing gentlemen and noblemen, and ſummoning them before their ſeſſions, for but walking out in their gardens a little after ſermon on the Lord's day, or ſitting half an hour too long at their bottle after dinner on other days; as ſo rigid and mortified in their own lives, that they were in danger of bringing back the monkiſh auſterity of the church of Rome. Whether would the author of ſuch a pamphlet have been reckoned ſound in his judgment? Would any body have been ſo idle as to read it? or, if they did, would they not have underſtood it backwards? Whereas, in the preſent caſe, there was a teſtimony given to the truth and juſtice of the characters drawn, by the aſſent and approbation of almoſt every reader.

The laity were not the only witneſſes of its propriety: many of the moſt eminent and reſpectable of the clergy of our neighbour-country, gave evidence in favour of the Characteriſtics. I have been well informed, that the Biſhop of L——n, in converſation with a nobleman of our own country, gave it a high commendation; and added withal: "It ſeems only directed againſt a certain party of the church of Scotland; but we have many in England to whom the characters are very applicable." It is alſo ſaid by thoſe who deſerve credit, that the

Biſhop of O——d ſpoke much in the ſame way; and ſaid, He wiſhed their own clergy would read it for their inſtruction and correction. And ſeveral have ſeen a letter from the preſent Biſhop of G——r, then Dr W——n, one of the moſt eminent authors of this age, to a miniſter in Scotland; in which he commends the performance, and particularly uſes theſe words: "A fine piece of raillery againſt a party to which we are no ſtrangers here."

Is it to be ſuppoſed, that ſuch perſons, eminent for worth and penetration, would have approved a thing ſo evidently criminal as ſome are pleaſed to think this tract? Or are there indeed perſons of the characters there repreſented in the church of England, and none in the church of Scotland? Shall the perſons above-named openly affirm, there are many ſuch in England; and muſt the man be condemned, without hearing, and without mercy, who is ſuſpected of hinting there are ſome ſuch in her ſiſter-church? I have often indeed reflected, with ſome ſurpriſe, on the different ſituation of affairs in Scotland and in England. I have ſeen many books printed in England, with the names of the authors, which plainly and without ambiguity affirm, that there are ſome of the clergy proud, ambitious, time-ſervers, and tools of thoſe in power; ſome of them lazy and ſlothful, lovers of eaſe and pleaſure; ſome of them ſcandalous and diſſolute in their manners; ſome of them wholly ignorant and inſufficient; and that all are tolerated by thoſe who preſide. Theſe things they affirm, without the leaſt danger, or apprehenſion of it. But were any man to publiſh a book that had the tenth part of ſuch ſeverity in it,

in Scotland, he ought, at the ſame time, to have a ſhip hired to fly to another country.

But the ſtrongeſt of all general proofs of the juſtice of the ſatire in the Characteriſtics, is the behaviour of thoſe who are ſuppoſed to be aimed at. The lamentable outcry they made at firſt, the malice and reſentment they have ever ſince diſcovered againſt the author, prove to a demonſtration, that his reproofs are well founded. We ſhall reduce the argument to this ſhort form: Either there was ground for this ſatire, or there was none. If there was none, neither ſurely could there be for one half of the complaints that have been made againſt it, for it would have been perfectly harmleſs. Many, even of the preſent clergy of the church of Scotland, do not find themſelves touched by it in the leaſt degree. If the characters of the reſt lay no more open to the ſtrokes of raillery, why ſhould they have been ſo much diſconcerted by it? If they were not hit, it is impoſſible they could be hurt.

Theſe general arguments, of themſelves, might ſatisfy any impartial perſon; but let us now go a little further, and conſider particularly the preſent ſtate of the church of Scotland, and how far it might give occaſion to the ſatire. It would be tedious to mention every ſingle ſtroke of raillery contained in that performance: but ſo far as it carries a cenſure of principles or characters generally prevailing, they may be reduced to the three following claſſes, Doctrine, Diſcipline, and Government. We ſhall examine each of theſe diſtinctly and ſeparately.

1. Let us conſider our preſent ſtate in point of

Doctrine. It is certainly hinted, that there are many who have departed from the old proteſtant principles contained in our Confeſſion of Faith and Catechiſms. And is it poſſible to deny this fact? Is it not the general complaint of the people through the whole kingdom, that from many pulpits there is little to be heard of the peculiar doctrines of the goſpel? or, if they be mentioned at all, it is no more than an aukward and cold compliment to ſave appearances, while ſomething very different is chiefly inſiſted on. If I am not miſtaken, the leading doctrines, both in the holy Scriptures, and in the confeſſions of all the proteſtant churches, are, "The loſt and fallen ſtate of man by nature;—The abſolute neceſſity of ſalvation through Jeſus Chriſt;—The pardon of ſin by the riches of divine grace, through the imputed righteouſneſs of the Saviour;—Sanctification and comfort by the Holy Ghoſt." Theſe doctrines are of ſo great moment, and have ſo extenſive an influence on the whole of practical religion, that where they are firmly believed, they will not only be often brought directly in view, but the manner of ſpeaking upon every other ſubject will be ſuch, as to leave no jealouſy of an intended omiſſion; yet certain it is, that many are the complaints upon this ſubject from every quarter; and therefore I am warranted to infer, either that the doctrine is corrupted, and ſomething elſe intentionally taught, or that the perſons complained of are utterly incapable of expreſſing themſelves in ſuch a manner as to be underſtood.

I ſhall now put the argument in another form. There is unqueſtionably a great difference in point of doctrine between ſome miniſters and others. If

the one ſort therefore preach the doctrine contained in the Confeſſion of Faith, undoubtedly the others either contradict or omit it. I am perſuaded there are ſome who would be aſhamed to have it thought that they preached this doctrine; and nothing is more plain, than that thoſe who are known to do ſo in the moſt clear and explicit manner, are uſually the objects of their jealouſy or hatred. It is probable I ſhall be told here, Why do you make theſe general complaints? name the particular perſons: produce your evidence, and prove the charge: they will in that caſe, be immediately laid aſide. To this I anſwer, that it is a very eaſy thing for a man to preach erroneous doctrine in ſuch a manner, that it ſhall be impoſſible to convict him by a legal proſecution in a free country. Every day ſhows, that men may print ſedition, treaſon, and even blaſphemy, in ſuch a way, that no human law can take hold of it. What then ſhould hinder men to preach hereſy under the ſame prudent diſguiſes? Beſides, what would a proſecution ſignify, if it muſt come before a court, of which, between clergy and laity, perhaps a plurality of members differ little in opinion from the pannel.'

My ſubject does not oblige me to ſay any thing upon the excellence and importance of the neglected truths, yet I will take this opportunity of delivering my opinion in a few words. Theſe doctrines, I am perſuaded, are not only true in themſelves, but the great foundation of all practical religion. Wherever they are maintained and inculcated, ſtrictneſs and purity of life and manners will be their natural effect. On the contrary, where they are

neglected, and a pretended theory of moral virtue ſubſtituted in their room, it will immediately and certainly introduce a deluge of profanity and immorality in practice. Of this the preſent ſtate of our own church and nation, compared with that of former periods, is a ſtrong and melancholy proof.

But there is no occaſion for entering further into this ſubject; the ridicule in the Characteriſtics turns not ſo much on the truth or importance of theſe doctrines, as the groſs abſurdity of men's ſubſcribing what they do not believe. However firm a perſuaſion I may have of any ſyſtem of opinions, the right of private judgment and freedom of inquiry, I would wiſh to remain ſacred and inviolable. Thoſe who uſe this liberty, with courage, and with candour, ought to be held in the higheſt eſteem by every one who differs from them. But for men, at their entrance on the ſacred office, ſolemnly to ſubſcribe to the truth of what all their lives after they endeavour to undermine and deſtroy, is at once ſo criminal and ſo abſurd, that no reproof given to it can poſſibly exceed in point of ſeverity. I take the liberty here of tranſcribing a paſſage from a printed ſermon, preached at the opening of a ſynod in Scotland: where, ſpeaking of theſe ſubſcriptions, the author ſays "This is ſo direct a violation of ſincerity, that it is aſtoniſhing to think how men can ſet their minds at eaſe in the proſpect, or keep them in peace after the deliberate commiſſion of it. The very excuſes and evaſions that are offered in defence of it, are a diſgrace to reaſon, as well as a ſcandal to religion. What ſucceſs can be expected from that man's miniſtry, who begins it with an act of ſo

complicated guilt? How can he take upon him to reprove others for ſin, or to train them up in virtue and true goodneſs, while himſelf is chargeable with direct, premeditated, and perpetual perjury? I know nothing ſo nearly reſembling it, as thoſe caſes in trade, in which men make falſe entries, and at once ſcreen and aggravate their fraud, by ſwearing, or cauſing others to ſwear, contrary to truth. This is juſtly reputed ſcandalous, even in the world; and yet I know no circumſtance in which they differ, that does not tend to ſhow it to be leſs criminal than the other *."

There may be ſome of the laity who have themſelves an inward averſion to the ſyſtem of doctrine contained in our Confeſſion and Catechiſms, and who, for that reaſon, are pleaſed with ſuch of the clergy as preach in a different ſtrain: but ſure I am, whoever will reflect upon the circumſtance of their having all ſubſcribed to it, can never have a high opinion of their conduct upon the whole, but muſt condemn the inſincerity, let the propoſitions ſubſcribed be in themſelves either true or falſe.

What is above, may ſuffice as to doctrine in general. The particular ſtrictures in the Characteriſtics againſt a falſe taſte in compoſition, may well enough anſwer for themſelves without any defence. That there have been many inſtances of ſtrange incongruity in this particular, is beyond all queſtion. A cold, heartleſs, indifferent manner of ſpeaking on thoſe ſubjects, in which both ſpeaker and hearer have ſo great, nay, no leſs than an infinite concern; an oſtentatious ſwell of words, or a pointed orna-

* Mr Witherſpoon's Synod-ſermon.

mented foppery of ſtyle, ſo ill ſuited to the gravity of the pulpit; an abſtracted, refined, or philoſophical diſquiſition, which, if it has any meaning at all, perhaps not three in the audience can poſſibly underſtand; are theſe imaginary, or are they real characters? If they are characters drawn from real life, where is the ſin or danger of expoſing them? For my own part, I am grieved to ſee ſo little learning among the generality of the miniſters of this church, which is probably owing to their poverty. But I am in a good meaſure comforted with this reflection, that the weakeſt commonly do as much ſervice as the wiſeſt; becauſe though they were ever ſo willing, they are not able to fill the audience with any admiration of themſelves, and therefore their attention muſt be fixed upon the truths delivered, and not the parts and manner of the ſpeaker.

2. Let us conſider a little the ſtate of the church of Scotland with reſpect to Diſcipline; that is to ſay, the inſpection of the morals of miniſters and people. Upon the moſt deliberate review, all I can find intimated in the Characteriſtics upon this ſubject, is, that there is far leſs ſtrictneſs and tenderneſs of converſation, leſs of the appearance of piety and devotion, in perſons of the ſpiritual function, than formerly; and leſs ſeverity, in the exerciſe of diſcipline, upon thoſe who offend.

What ſhall I ſay in defence of this, but that the thing appears to me to be manifeſtly true? There are no particular crimes charged, but in general, levity and worldly converſation, with a neglect of the duties of the ſacred office. And would to God there were not the greateſt cauſe of charging, not merely ſome few diſorderly perſons, not merely the

youngeſt ſort in general, but all without exception, as in ſome meaſure guilty. If there is a remarkable increaſe of corruption among the worſt, there will alſo be a viſible declenſion in zeal and piety among the beſt. This is what the natural courſe of things teaches us to expect. It is alſo what our Saviour himſelf hath forewarned us of; "Becauſe iniquity ſhall abound, the love of many ſhall wax cold," Matt. xxiv. 12. The preſent age is a moving example of this, both with reſpect to the clergy and laity. As there is an alarming degree of infidelity and impiety among many of every rank, ſo even thoſe who preſerve ſome regard for religion, fall very far ſhort of that eminent and exemplary piety which ſome alive have ſeen in Chriſtians of the laſt age, and of which our fathers have told us.

I am very ſenſible, that the degeneracy of their own times has been the conſtant and uniform complaint of religious and moral writers in every age, and that they may be liable to ſome deception in this particular: but at the ſame time, the records of hiſtory put it beyond all queſtion, that there have been many inſtances, among all nations, of local and temporary reformation, of local and occaſional depravation. Perhaps (though I ſee no reaſon for affirming it) the quantity of human virtue, through the whole earth, may be nearly the ſame in every age; yet certainly it often changes its reſidence, and leaves one nation, to ſettle in another. Nay, it ſeems very reaſonable to believe, that as human things are never at a ſtand, a church and nation, in a quiet and peaceable ſtate, is always growing inſenſibly worſe, till it be either ſo corrupt as to deſerve and procure exterminating judgments,

or in the infinite mercy of God, by ſome great ſhock or revolution, is brought back to ſimplicity and purity, and reduced, as it were, to its firſt principles.

They are much to be blamed therefore, who, becauſe the complaints of ſome moral writers are exaggerated, and their compariſons not always well founded, treat every thing of this nature as fooliſh and viſionary, refuſing ſo much as to examine whether the charge brought againſt themſelves is juſt or groundleſs. On the contrary, I cannot help being of opinion, that it is every man's duty to do all in his power to retard the progreſs of corruption, by ſtrictneſs and tenderneſs in his own perſonal walk, fidelity and vigilance in the duties of a public ſtation, and a bold and open teſtimony againſt every thing contrary to the intereſt of true and undefiled religion.

But becauſe we have now chiefly to do with the clergy, let us return to them. If it were proper, I could eaſily produce examples of indecency and impiety in clergymen, ſufficient to fill every ſerious perſon with the deepeſt concern; and which the moſt relaxed moraliſt would not be able to defend; but as I would fain believe, that things very groſs are yet but ſeldom committed among us, and are not commonly known, I ſhall confine myſelf only to things more openly practiſed by many, and too eaſily tolerated by all. This is the more proper, that the book I am defending can ſcarcely be charged with diſcloſing hidden ſcenes, but dwells on ſuch deviations from duty, as are epidemic and general, and rather ſmiles at the ridiculous, than expoſes the guilty part of every character.

There is one circumſtance which I am afraid betrays many into a miſtake. The world in general expects a great "comparative" ſanctity in thoſe who bear the ſacred office; therefore, when miniſters take a little liberty, others think themſelves warranted to take a great deal more. Theſe ſentiments, which are univerſal, contribute to keep the proportion between the clergy and laity always nearly the ſame. When therefore clergymen ſee the diſtance ſtill remaining between them and others, they are ready to forget how far they are both from the place where they ought to have been.

Many things are faults in a miniſter, which, if not innocent, are certainly far leſs criminal in other men. There is alſo a ſpecies of faults which I apprehend do render a miniſter juſtly contemptible, upon which no law, either civil or eccleſiaſtic, can lay hold; and which, for that reaſon, are the proper objects both of ſerious and ſatirical reproof. If one ſet apart to the ſervice of Chriſt in the goſpel, manifeſtly ſhows his duty to be a burden, and does no more work than is barely ſufficient to ſcreen him from cenſure; if he reckons it a piece of improvement, how ſeldom, or how ſhort, he can preach; and make his boaſt how many omiſſions he has brought a patient and an injured people to endure without complaint; while at the ſame time, he cannot ſpeak with temper of thoſe who are willing to do more than himſelf; however impoſſible it may be to aſcertain his faults by a libel, he juſtly merits the deteſtation of every faithful miniſter, and every real Chriſtian.

That ſuch is the caſe with not a few amongſt us,

there is the greateſt reaſon to believe. The heavy and general complaints of the people from ſome quarters, and their groſs ignorance in others, prove it beyond contradiction. Thoſe whoſe conduct is not liable to this imputation, will not find, that they have ſuffered the ſmalleſt injury, in point of character, by the publication of the Characteriſtics, excepting ſuch as feel the wounds given to their friends as ſenſibly as thoſe given to themſelves. In this caſe, however, they have an eaſy remedy: Let them "have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs, but rather reprove them."

I am unwilling to enter farther into the characters of miniſters; and therefore ſhall only add, let the impartial but conſider what happened a few years ago, and then ſay, whether we are not greatly relaxed in point of diſcipline. Did not ſeveral miniſters think themſelves at liberty to attend the entertainments of the ſtage? I am ſenſible, many will immediately paſs ſentence upon me as a perſon of very narrow principles, for introducing this as a mark of our depravity. I muſt, however, inſiſt upon it, from the united teſtimony of the beſt and wiſeſt of the Heathen writers, the uniform ſentiments and practice of the primitive church, and the pieces written for the ſtage in modern times, which any man may peruſe, that the performances of hired players have never yet been conducted with ſo much decency as to deſerve the countenance and preſence of a miniſter of Chriſt. The General Aſſembly did indeed judicially diſapprove of that liberty taken by miniſters; but the cenſure inflicted on the offenders is ſo gentle, that it was then the opinion of many,

it would have a greater tendency to encourage, than to prevent the repetition of the offence. It now appears they judged right; for, if I am not greatly misinformed, the offence has been repeated since that time with absolute impunity.

If the morals of the clergy themselves are corrupted, there is all the reason in the world to expect, that the reins of discipline will be slackened as to the disorders of others. This, indeed, is so notorious, that it would be idle and unnecessary to attempt a proof of it; and therefore I shall only make a reflection or two upon the reception given, not long ago, to a proposal for censuring those writers who had published and avowed irreligious and immoral sentiments. It is well known what violent opposition this proposal met with; nor will it soon be forgot, what sort of reasoning was used against it; and nothing can show, in a clearer light, that low and languid state to which our discipline is now reduced. It was generally represented as a species of persecution, and as flowing from a persecuting spirit. Upon this I shall lay before the reader one or two very short reflections.

*1st.* What is ecclesiastical censure? Is it any more than a judicial declaration, that such and such things are contrary to the spirit of the gospel, and inconsistent with the character of a Christian? No civil penalties follow upon it among us, and no civil penalties ought to follow upon it in any nation. From this it is very plain, that such censures, as they are in their nature just and necessary, so they carry the evidence of their justice in themselves. If in any case they are misapplied, and a person is condemned for what is laudable, such condemnation can

reflect no diſhonour but upon thoſe who pronounce it.

2*dly*. Whether ſhould we be moſt ready to be provoked at the impudence of profeſſed unbelievers, deſiring to retain the name of Chriſtians, or to ſmile at the abſurdity of calling it perſecution to deprive them of it? If infidelity were a principle, properly ſpeaking, or implied a ſyſtem of real and poſitive opinions, all of that perſuaſion would reckon themſelves bound as honeſt men, to renounce their baptiſm, and every apparent relation to the deluded believers. Inſtead of deſiring admiſſion to what Chriſtians call their privileges, they would conſider the impoſition of ſuch things as a great hardſhip, and beg that they might have nothing to do with them; and in ſuch a caſe certainly due regard would be paid to their tender conſciences. As to the charge of perſecution, it is the moſt ridiculous imaginable. They themſelves are the aggreſſors; and though they are our open enemies, think proper to be greatly offended, when we ſay they are not our friends.

3*dly*. What can be the meaning of thoſe profeſſing Chriſtians who deſire to retain in their communion the enemies of the goſpel? Can they, or will they do us any ſervice? Is it poſſible that they can bring us any honour? Can it be of any benefit to themſelves? None of all theſe. But it muſt viſibly leſſen the ſanctity of the Chriſtian character in the apprehenſion of mankind in general, and give the unhappy perſons themſelves more reaſon than any other circumſtance whatever, to ſay, the whole is nothing at bottom but deceit and impoſition.

3. It now remains only to conſider the preſent ſtate of the church of Scotland with reſpect to its government. This, ſo far as it is different from the former, or at leaſt ſo far as it is touched upon in the Characteriſtics, relates chiefly to the admiſſion of miniſters, with a few hints upon the qualifications and atteſtations of elders who ſit as members in the ſupreme court.

The admiſſion of miniſters into vacant congregations is indeed a matter of the higheſt moment, and the oppoſition of ſentiments among us upon this ſubject, probably lies at the bottom of all our other differences. I am alſo of opinion, that the continuance of what have been commonly called "violent ſettlements," will have the moſt certain and powerful influence in baniſhing religion and decency, and bringing us into a ſituation of which I charitably believe, many who proſecute theſe meaſures have not the leaſt ſuſpicion. Willingly therefore, were it in my power, would I contribute to open the eyes of ſome of my brethren, on the pernicious conſequences of their own conduct. But I have the diſcouragement to reflect, that the force of cuſtom, and the power of prejudice, will probably ſhut their ears to any thing I have to offer.

In order, if poſſible, to procure ſome attention, let me entreat the reader not to imagine, that I have embraced, or am about to plead in favour of ſuch ridiculous and abſurd notions, as through ignorance or malice are commonly imputed to me and others of the ſame ſentiments, ſuch as, That every Chriſtian, as ſuch, has a right to call a miniſter upon an eſtabliſhment; and that Chriſt hath purchaſed this

right for them by his death; and therefore that they ought to aſſert this right, though in the moſt ſeditious and diſorderly manner. We know perfectly well, that it is a queſtion, not of right but of fact, Who has a title to call a miniſter to enjoy the public maintenance? and that none have any title to it at all, excepting thoſe to whom the law gives it. Neither would we contend, that every man ought to have ſuch a right, though we have it in our power to make new laws upon that ſubject. Such a ſeeming equality would be a real inequality. The ſum of my belief in this matter is contained in the following propoſitions. Every man hath a natural right, well ſecured to him in this happy iſland, to judge for himſelf in every thing that regards religion, and to adhere to any miniſter he pleaſes on the eſtabliſhment, or in oppoſition to it. The legal ſtipend, levied originally from the public, was certainly intended to provide a ſufficient and uſeful paſtor to the people within the bounds of a certain pariſh. He cannot be of much ſervice to them, if they be upon ill terms with him; he can be of none at all, if they will not hear him. No man ought to be compelled, by eccleſiaſtical or civil penalties, to ſubmit in ſuch a caſe; and though he were, ſuch forced religion would be worſe than none. The only inference I draw from theſe principles, is, that decency, and our indiſpenſable duty as church-courts, requires us to make no ſuch ſettlements, without the deepeſt regret, and never without a real neceſſity. Perhaps I might go a little farther, and ſay, that nothing can excuſe us from making them at all, while our office of ordination continues in its preſent form

The queſtion then reſts preciſely on this ſingle point: Does the law as it now ſtands, compel us to make all theſe ſettlements without exception, and without expoſtulation? If it does, what is the benefit, and what is the meaning of the ſeparate independent juriſdiction of our courts, to which the deciſion of ſuch cauſes is committed by law, and ſecured by the treaty of union? It is in vain to diſſemble it, we have brought a great part of the hardſhips upon ourſelves; and thoſe who in their hearts are averſe from parochial elections, only pretend the law as a colour for their conduct. Were ſettlements refuſed when highly inexpedient, and patrons treated with decency, we ſhould have little trouble from them. At any rate, as the perſons preſented, whether probationers or miniſters, are entirely in our power, by authority exerted here, every remaining difficulty would be removed.

I believe, this is the firſt inſtance that ever happened, of churchmen ſurrendering the power and influence which the law gave them, into other hands, without reſiſtance, and without complaint: nay, many of them zealouſly contending for it, and eſtabliſhing it by their own repeated deciſions. It would be no hard matter to point out the real cauſe or cauſes of this conduct; but at preſent I forbear, and leave it to every man to aſſign them for himſelf; only I cannot help lamenting, that our noble, venerable, republican conſtitution, ſeems to be ſo near its period. Whether it is likely to undergo any outward change is of little moment: when the ſpirit is gone, the remaining name and form is not worth being contended for.

But that I may not wholly yield to deſpondency, ſince an alteration of meaſures is yet poſſible, I ſhall now lay before the reader a few of the certain conſequences of our continuing in the ſame. When it comes to be a ſettled point, that a preſentation, alone and unſupported, infallibly ſecures a ſettlement, they will be openly and ſcandalouſly bought and ſold. This is the caſe in England, notwithſtanding the ſtrongeſt laws againſt ſimony, and a tremendous oath, which the incumbent himſelf muſt take before his induction. And it will always be the caſe in every country in the preſent ſtate of human nature. Our own experience may teach us this. Within theſe few years, there have been ſeveral complaints of ſimony in this church, and very great zeal has been ſhown to make laws for preventing it. That zeal is highly commendable: but, alas! it will be quite ineffectual. To ſtrengthen the power of preſentations, and yet prevent ſimony, is juſt as hopeful an attempt, as to open the windows, and keep out the light. The art and invention of intereſted perſons to find a way of evading laws after they are made, is always far ſuperior to the foreſight of the wiſeſt men, in providing againſt caſes which have not yet happened.

There is one diſtreſſing circumſtance in this proſpect, that ſimoniacal pactions among us will be hurtful and reproachful in an uncommon degree. The ſettlements in Scotland are generally ſmall: they will be every year of ſtill leſs value by the improvements of the country, and increaſing wealth of other claſſes of men. In what a beggarly condi-

tion then will thoſe be who have been obliged to pay dear for ſo ſcanty a proviſion? Perhaps the reader will ſay, Happily, few of the purchaſers have any money to give. I believe ſo: but this will not mend the matter: for the moſt mean and ſordid, perhaps ſcandalous, compliances muſt come in the place of money. I am aſhamed even to mention ſome of the ways by which it is undoubtedly certain preſentations will be, becauſe they have been, procured. Can any miniſter think of this without the deepeſt concern?

Such a miniſtry muſt fall into the loweſt and moſt contemptible ſtate, through poverty and ignorance. We differ much from the church of England. In that church, though there are many of the inferior clergy in the moſt abject condition, there are alſo many dignified perſons, as they are called, who enjoy ample revenues, and great eaſe. Theſe have noble opportunities for ſtudy, and are enabled to diſtinguiſh themſelves by works of literature. By this means the church of England derives a luſtre from the characters and writings of particular members, which ſhe does not deſerve for the general frame of her conſtitution. But what muſt be the caſe in Scotland? Shall we venture to look a little further into futurity? Have our countrymen ſo little ſpirit as to ſubmit to ſo much miſery and ſcorn? No; it is more than probable ſome of them, at once ſtimulated by ambition, and compelled by neceſſity, will gradually alter the conſtitution. They will introduce ſinecures and pluralities, that they themſelves may live in ſplendour and dignity, while the remaining part ſhall be thruſt down to a ſtate more deſpicable

than ever. It is in vain to think, that the equality of votes in a General Aſſembly will hinder this: for as power follows property, a very few perſons, enriched by additional ſalaries, with the faithful aſſiſtance of thoſe who are dazzled with the ſame expectations, will eaſily govern the reſt. The truth is, many of them deſpairing of ſucceſs, and ill able to bear the expence of travelling, will ſtay at home, and let them do juſt as they pleaſe.

The above is no doubt a very melancholy proſpect, and will in time have a moſt malignant influence upon the morals of the clergy. But the truth is, the ſettlement of pariſhes by preſentations, is directly and immediately hurtful to the characters of thoſe who are training up for the ſacred office. When they know that their future ſettlement does not depend upon the apoſtolic qualification, their being "of good report," but upon intereſt with the great, it muſt neceſſarily introduce, in many caſes, licentious and irregular practices, as well as habituate them to fawning and ſervility. There is more danger in this than many apprehend. On conſulting the hiſtory of the church we ſhall find few characters more odious in clergymen, than ambition, and open ſolicitation of eccleſiaſtical preferment. I am ſorry that ſo much way has been given to this already, without having been obſerved. Small changes in forms and language, do often introduce great changes in manners and characters. In ancient times men could hardly be perſuaded to take on them the weighty and important office of a biſhop. In times not very diſtant in our own church, the miniſter or probationer called, was never conſidered as

a party, but as the ſubject concerning which the proceſs was carried on by the callers or refuſers. But they have been for ſome time paſt declared to be parties: they begin to attend the cauſe, to appear at the bar, to urge their claim, to conſider the people who are to be under their charge as their adverſaries, and too often to treat them with contempt and diſdain.

I know ſome treat with great neglect the danger of a lax and immoral miniſtry, from the preſent method of ſettling vacancies. So long as they are of this mind, it is no wonder they continue in the practice; for it can be of very little conſequence how men are choſen, if they are fit for the office. They tell us, an edict is ſerved before admiſſion, where every man has acceſs to object againſt the life or doctrine of the preſentee. The effect of this will be very ſmall. Judicial proceſſes of that kind are always expenſive and invidious, often difficult, and ſometimes dangerous. How few then will be ſo public ſpirited as to undertake them! The example of England may ſatisfy us of this. It is as competent to proſecute a man for error or immorality in England as in Scotland: yet what perſon or pariſh ever thinks of making the experiment?

Others tell us, "It is all in your own power: why do you licenſe improper men? it is impoſſible to preſent any man who has not a regular licenſe." How ſurpriſing is it, that perſons of ever ſo little reflection ſhould make uſe of this argument? It proceeds upon a ſuppoſition, which the leaſt knowledge of human nature muſt ſhow to be unreaſonable, *viz.* That every preſbytery, through the whole kingdom, will be unalterably faithful and vigilant. If there

be but a corrupt or negligent majority in any one of them, the licenſe will operate over all. Nay, let them be ſuppoſed ever ſo faithful, they may be deceived by an hypocrite, or not able to find ſuch proofs of what they ſtrongly ſuſpect, as to found and ſupport a ſentence of refuſal. The more we conſider the matter in every poſſible view, we ſhall find, that a parochial election of miniſters would be a better ſecurity for regularity and decency in the clergy, than all the laws that ever were framed on the ſubject. Frequently men cannot, and ſometimes they will not, execute the laws; but this rule would operate uniformly and powerfully, and would execute itſelf.

I add only one other unhappy conſequence of continuing the preſent method of ſupplying vacancies. If a preſentation muſt ſupercede all judgment of the church-courts, as to the propriety of an ordination, and even the expediency of a tranſlation, we may expect to ſee ſome of the weakeſt, and moſt contemptible miniſters, ſettled in the moſt conſpicuous and important charges. Perſons of this character are not always free from vanity and ambition, nor always deſtitute of intereſt by male or female connections. We have had ſome inſtances of this kind already; but much greater and more ſhameful may be expected, ſo ſoon as preſentations have acquired an irreſiſtible power. It will be ſaid, perhaps, They have had all the force in law, for above forty years, that is likely they ever will have. I anſwer, that is very true; but every one knows their very different effect in practice at the beginning and at the end of that period. Patrons continued long to pay a regard to the opinion of the

heritors, according to rank and character in the congregation concerned. As they found their own ſtrength increaſing, however, they paid gradually leſs and leſs; they now pay very little; and the time ſeems juſt at hand, when they will pay none at all.

This argument will, I hope, have the greater weight, that I have known inſtances of different perſons, both among the clergy and the laity, who had concurred in ſupporting preſentations in other caſes, but who were both alarmed and provoked when they themſelves came to be treated in a tyrannical manner. The heritors in general, indeed, have been long made inſtrumental in bearing down the common people; and this being finiſhed, they themſelves, as is almoſt conſtantly the caſe in political ſtruggles, muſt feel the weight of that authority which they have eſtabliſhed. The evil hath taken ſo deep root, that it is ſomewhat uncertain whether a remedy be now poſſible; nay, it is ſtill more uncertain, whether any reſiſtance will be ſeriouſly attempted. The conſequences however are like to be ſo terrible, that they may well juſtify complaint, and, in particular, be my excuſe for endeavouring to expoſe the conduct of thoſe whom I conſidered as betraying the liberties of the public.

As to the cenſures inflicted on miniſters who refuſed to be preſent at the ordination of miniſters to no body, I ſhall ſay but little, becauſe that ſeverity ſeems to have ceaſed. Several miniſters have abſented themſelves, in like caſes ſince the depoſition of Mr Gilleſpie, and yet have eſcaped with impunity. The reaſon probably is, the thing is now

ſo common, that the odium attending it is become inconſiderable, and not worth the pains of an endeavour to divide it. But as that meaſure was once like to become univerſal, may I not obſerve, that it remains in the hiſtory of our church an example of what, alas! appears but too plainly in the hiſtory of every church, That in proportion as authority is relaxed in inforcing the laws of God, it is commonly ſtretched and carried to exceſs in ſupport of the unneceſſary, doubtful, or pernicious commandments of men? Let any man produce a period in which there was leſs rigour in puniſhing miniſters for neglect of parochial duties, or irregularity in private practice, than when they were threatened with depoſition if they refuſed to join in theſe not very honourable ſettlements. Nay, though we ſhould look upon the preſervation of church-authority as a matter of great moment, it was not obedience to the ſtanding laws, on which the welfare of the whole depends, that was ſo ſtrictly required, but compliance with, or approbation of the deciſions of the annual Aſſemblies in their judicative capacity. It hath often ſurpriſed me to hear the plea of conſcience, in ſuch caſes, treated as a mere pretence. What ſentiments muſt thoſe perſons have, who look upon it as a thing incredible, that a man ſhould ſcruple being preſent at an ordination, where ſome of the anſwers to the queſtions put to the candidate, though joined in with a part of divine worſhip, are either directly falſe, or wholly abſurd?

This part of the Apology has been ſo much lengthened out, that I wholly omit the atteſting unqualified and admitting unatteſted elders into the

church-courts. There is indeed so manifest a breach of truth in the one case, and of law and order in the other, that if men do not see it themselves, it must be owing to such invincible prejudice as it is in vain to contend with.

Thus I have laid before the reader, in a serious and candid manner, what I hope will appear a sufficient apology for this offensive performance. Nothing could have induced me to the attempt, but the unwearied endeavours of many to represent it as an evidence of a bad temper and unchristian disposition, which the particular structure of the book made some undiscerning persons rashly assent to. I have not the smallest reason to repent of it on account of its nature, its design, or its effects upon the public. If there was any mistake, it was in point of prudence, which should have directed me to avoid bringing such a load of malice and resentment upon myself. This has afforded me one observation not very honourable to human nature, *viz.* That the rage of enemies is always more active and more lasting than the affection of friends. It often happens, that some who are very much pleased to find one stand forth as a champion for their political opinions, and ready to go, as it were, to the front of the battle; when their enemies, smarting with the wounds he has given them, traduce and vilify his character, these esteemed friends often, in a great measure, give it up, and discover much satisfaction with themselves, that they had acted in a wiser and more cautious manner.

I conclude the whole, with beseeching all who are convinced, that the present state of the church

of Scotland is such as I have represented, to exert themselves with zeal and activity for her preservation and recovery. There is a wonderful, though a natural union, among all worldly men against the spirit and power of true religion, wherever it appears. I am sorry to add, that this is one of the instances in which the children of this world are wiser in their generation, than the children of light. There are many whose conduct shows them to be actuated by an equal mixture of sloth and despair. They are unwilling to act with vigour, and defend themselves, by alledging, that nothing can be done with success. How much better would the old Roman maxim be, *Nunquam desperandum est de republica!* and how much better reason have we to adopt it! Nothing is impossible to the power of God. I add, that the most remarkable times of the revival of religion, in this part of the united kingdom, immediately succeeded times of the greatest apostacy, when "truth" seemed to be "fallen in the street, and equity could not enter." This was the case immediately before the year 1638. Corruption in doctrine, looseness in practice, and slavish submission in politics, had overspread the church of Scotland: and yet, in a little time, she appeared in greater purity and in greater dignity than ever she had done before, or perhaps than ever she had done since that period. Let no Christian, therefore, give way to desponding thoughts. We plead the cause that shall at last prevail. Religion shall rise from its ruins; and its oppressed state at present should not only excite us to pray, but encourage us to hope for its speedy revival.

THE

# HISTORY

OF A

# CORPORATION

OF

# SERVANTS.

DISCOVERED A FEW YEARS AGO IN THE INTERIOR PARTS OF

## SOUTH AMERICA.

CONTAINING SOME VERY SURPRISING EVENTS AND EXTRAORDINARY CHARACTERS.

# ADVERTISEMENT.

*THE Reader will find himself obliged to the Author of the following History, for the pains he hath taken to render it as entertaining and sentimental as possible. With this view he hath entirely avoided the use of foreign names, often hard to pronounce, and when pronounced wholly without meaning. Instead of this, when he had occasion to mention particular ranks of men, offices, or customs, he chose to express them by what did most exactly correspond with them in our own country. By this means, the narrative, disencumbered of definitions or circumlocutions, is rendered quite easy and intelligible.*

THE

# HISTORY

OF A

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## *INTRODUCTION.*

THE ſkill of an author, like that of a merchant, lies chiefly in judging with readineſs and certainty, what kind of commodities, and in what quantity, any particular age or place is able and willing to receive. This I have, of late, made very much my ſtudy, with regard to our own age and country, and the reſult of my inquiry is as follows. There are two ſorts of ſubjects for which there is a general demand in Great Britain at this time, *viz.* (1.) Biography, if any thing may be ſo called that gives an account of the lives of perſons that never exiſted, but in the imagination of the authors. This is indeed, a moſt fruitful ſubject, and under the various titles of Hiſtories, Lives, Adventures, Memoirs, *&c.* teaches people how to live after any imaginable plan. (2.) The other is the formation of ſchemes and

projects, to be carried on by subscription, for the good of mankind, which never were so favourably received as at present, the abortion or mismanagement of nine in ten of them not having in the least abated the ardour of the public. If any be of opinion, that new discoveries in the science of morals, for the support of infidelity, are as favourably received as any of these, such must be told, that they are but superficial observers, or under the prejudice of religious enthusiasm. The discoveries here pointed at, have been of late years so various, so contradictory, and so short-lived, that they really raise very little curiosity. As an instance of this, the reader is desired to recollect if he can, the most extraordinary thing of the kind that ever was attempted. A great living author, David Hume, Esq. not long ago, made health, cleanliness, and broad shoulders, capital virtues, and a running sore, an unpardonable crime; yet was it but little taken notice of when first published, and is now almost wholly forgotten.

Therefore, an author is undoubtedly happy who hath hit upon, or happens to be furnished with a subject suited to the taste of the age. This I humbly presume to be my own case. I have had the good fortune, lately to obtain a distinct information of a most extraordinary history, which also may perhaps lay a foundation for some new scheme, or, at least, for mending and cobbling those which are now cracked and old. The only misfortune that it labours under is, that it is true; for I remember the lofty and sonorous earl of Shaftesbury, whose memory I greatly revere, tells us there is much

more truth in fiction than in fact. The meaning of this is, that authors of taſte and genius like himſelf, employing their fancy in delineating feigned characters, give ordinarily a juſter view of nature than tedious relaters of what really happened.

This loſs, however, I truſt will be abundantly made up by the extraordinary and wonderful nature of the paſſages I am to relate, which it is to be hoped, will have the effect of fiction in enlivening the imagination of the writer, and, indeed, very poſſibly, may be miſtaken for fiction by many readers. The truth is, I hope there is a ſingular felicity in my ſubject in every reſpect. If the excellency of hiſtory, according to Lord Shafteſbury, lies in its being like fiction, and the excellency of fiction in its being like to real facts, according to all other men, the ſubject in hand muſt needs excel, as it partakes of both theſe characters. It will be like truth, becauſe it is true; and it will be like fiction, becauſe the ſame train of events, perhaps, never happened in any other place or nation.

To introduce myſelf to my ſubject, and inform the reader how I came by the knowledge of it, he may be pleaſed to recollect, That in the year 1741, when Commodore (afterwards Lord) Anſon made a voyage round the world, one of the ſhips of his ſquadron, called the Wager, was caſt away upon a deſert iſland in the South Seas. The greateſt part of the crew who were ſaved lengthened the long-boat, and made a long and dangerous voyage through the ſtreights of Magellan, to Brazil. As they were often obliged to ſwim aſhore for proviſions and water, it happened that, at one time, there were to

the number of fourteen of them aſhore upon a part of the coaſt very far ſouth, near the mouth of the ſtreights. Having ſtayed all night, unfortunately next morning the wind blew ſo hard in ſhore that only ſix of the fourteen were able to get aboard and the veſſel was obliged to go away and leave the other eight.

It is needleſs here to inſiſt upon the various accidents they met with in this perilous ſituation. The difficulty of obtaining food, without which they muſt very ſoon have died: the mean and ſcanty proviſion with which nature will be ſuſtained, when there is no more or better to be had: the inventive faculty of man for ſupplying his wants when reduced to abſolute extremity, and a hundred other things which have been repreſented in all poſſible lights by other writers of adventures. Let it ſuffice, therefore to ſay, that in proceſs of time, four of them were killed by the inhabitants of the country, and the remaining four taken priſoners. After changing their maſters ſeveral times, they came at laſt into the hands of one who carried them a great way off to the capital of an empire, and the court of a powerful prince. There they lived many years, learned the language, and had occaſion to ſee the manners of the country. Two of them, at laſt, acquired ſuch a degree of favour, that, in compliance with their earneſt requeſt, they were ſent to the Portugueze ſettlements, and came from thence to Great Britain.

One of theſe perſons, who was a man of tolerable education, as well as good ſenſe and comprehenſion, coming to live in my neighbourhood, com-

municated to me what follows of this hiſtory. In general he told me, the conduct and characters of men, bating ſome little differences of faſhion and modes of addreſs, which are ever changing in every country, were much like what they are among ourſelves. Court favour was precarious and changeable. Intereſt and ambition prevailed more in obtaining places of power and profit, than modeſt and peaceable merit. Cold and ſober men gathered wealth, and crept up, by ſlow but ſure ſteps, to ſtation and dignity; while the lively ſprightly fellows threw away all that they had, and ſoon became contemptible to others, and uſeleſs to themſelves. The knowledge of the world was of very little benefit; for though every claſs of men could clearly diſcern the errors that adhered to thoſe of a different rank, they could ſcarcely obſerve, and never would imitate their commendable qualities. For example, ſays he, a profuſe, diſeaſed, needy lord, would ſpeak with infinite contempt of the meanneſs of ſoul, and hardneſs of heart, frequently to be found in traders and men of buſineſs, but never once thought of following their example in ſobriety, application, and regularity in the diſtribution of their time, to which they manifeſtly owed all their ſucceſs. So that upon the whole, he concluded that human nature in all ages and in all places was the ſame. A ſage remark, the reader will ſay, but I can eaſily remember to have heard it before.

There, was however, one claſs of men in that nation, whoſe conſtitution as a body, and many of whoſe characters and practices were of the moſt extraordinary kind, *viz.* the SERVANTS. Their ſtate

and conduct, at the time which fell under his own obſervation, were ſo ſingular that they excited his curioſity; and induced him to inquire with great care into their condition, as far back as hiſtory could trace them. This is what I am now to communicate to the public, being willing that my book ſhould be buried in oblivion, or burned with diſgrace, if a ſtory can be produced equal, or even ſimilar to it, in any other age or country.

# CHAP. I.

## *Of the Original State of the Servants, and their erection into a Corporation.*

IN very early times, of which there are ſtill ſome accounts handed down by tradition, the ſervants were in a ſtate not much different from what they are at preſent among us. It does not appear that ever they were ſlaves, or were treated with exceſſive rigour or ſeverity. They were trained up in ſome acquaintance with, and applied themſelves to ſuch work as they ſeemed to be fitted for by the turn of their minds, and the ſtrength or agility of their bodies. They were choſen or hired by every family as they pleaſed, made a voluntary agreement, and were employed in doing what was neceſſary of every kind. They were paid as they and the family could agree, eating of their own labours, and were cheriſhed and careſſed in proportion as they deſerved it. In caſes of remarkable neglect, diſobedience, or miſbehaviour, they were turned away. This, indeed, happened but ſeldom, for they were in general, honeſt, ſober, and induſtrious. They had the intereſt of their maſters at heart, nay, ſo remarkable were ſome of them in theſe times for fidelity, that (it is reported) they ſeemed to have as much or more

pleaſure in doing their work, as in receiving their wages.

But it happened, ſome ages ago, that one of their princes was ſaved from a formidable conſpiracy againſt his life and crown, juſt upon the point of execution, by the fidelity and courage of a ſervant. The prince was a man of a warm heart, and an uncommonly generous diſpoſition. Not content with bountifully rewarding his benefactor by kindneſs to himſelf and family, he conceived a deſign of perpetuating the memory of the fact, and ſhowing his gratitude by doing ſomething in favour of the whole order or body of men. For this purpoſe, being poſſeſſed of abſolute power, after conſulting upon it for ſome time, he eſtabliſhed the following regulations, not doubting that they would be highly beneficial to his ſubjects in general, as well as the ſervants in particular.

1. It was ordered that the wages of ſervants ſhould be conſiderably augmented, and fixed to a certain rate in all the king's dominions. This was evidently dictated by compaſſion. He obſerved that it was very hard and unequal, that thoſe who were conſtantly employed in labour, who promoted the intereſt of their maſters ſo much, ſhould notwithſtanding live ſo poorly; that they ſhould have nothing but the coarſeſt diet, and no more money than was barely neceſſary to purchaſe the meaneſt coathing. He uſed, when the matter was under deliberation, to reaſon thus, "For my part, I think a king ought to have the heart of a man; I conſider the ſervants as my fellow creatures, and am deſirous that they ſhould taſte ſome of thoſe pleaſures and

delicacies of life, which they contribute ſo largely to procure for the accommodation of others."

He alſo obſerved, that intereſt, as well as compaſſion, dictated the ſame thing; that keeping them poor would entirely diſpirit them, and make them do their duty in the moſt careleſs and ſlothful manner, by which their maſters muſt receive manifeſt prejudice. On the other hand, a good and ſecure proviſion would give them great vigour and alacrity. He ventured to foretel, that a third part increaſe of their ſalary would increaſe their work in a far greater proportion, ſo that the public would be gainers by this ſeeming burden. Beſides, that ſuch a fixed proviſion would free them from all temptation to pilfering and ſtealing, and ſo be an improvement upon their honeſty as well as activity.

Another advantage he propoſed to reap by this meaſure, was increaſing the number of Servants. It was well enough remembered that, at no very diſtant period, the kingdom had ſuffered not a little from the ſcarcity of ſervants; ſo that the land lay uncultivated, and many branches of buſineſs neglected. Now it was impoſſible to avoid ſeeing that this meaſure muſt increaſe the number of ſervants, by inducing them to come into the kingdom from the moſt diſtant places, as well as encouraging them to marry and propagate, and bleſs their country with a multitude of uſeful hands.

Nay, he even called in the aid of luxury to enforce his argument, alledging, that keeping his ſervants poor, muſt make them ſordid and naſty, ſo that it would be odious to people of taſte and elegance to have them about their perſons, or even to

ſee them in their houſes. But by carrying the propoſed deſign into execution, he ſaid, he hoped to ſee the ſervants in general genteel, well-dreſſed, well-behaved, and converſable men. That this muſt be an advantage in particular to families in the country, who were conſiderably diſtant from one another, and in certain ſeaſons of the year could have very little intercourſe; nay, even that in cities and places of greater reſort, it would be better, in many reſpects, to have opportunities of converſation within doors, than to be always obliged to ſeek ſociety abroad.

In ſhort, he ſuppoſed that the regulation now eſtabliſhed would put an entire period to all murmurings and complaints of ſervants, and their deſires of ſhifting from one family to another, which was a ſource of daily inconveniences. They muſt be touched, ſays he, with a ſenſe of gratitude for ſo unexpected and ſo happy a change in their ſituation, and will therefore be thoroughly content, and *never aſk for more.*

2. Having the public good all along at heart, as much as the advantage of the ſervants, he ordered ſchools and places of exerciſes to be built, and maſters appointed to train up ſervants and fit them for their ſeveral truſts.—There were different tracts of education chalked out for all different ſorts of employments. It was particularly expected of the directors of theſe academies, that they would ſelect the ſervants fit for every branch, and both educate and diſpoſe of them according as their genius ſhould intimate they were moſt capable. As for example, for cooks, waiting-men, and other domeſtic ſervants, and

grooms, gardeners, and labouring men of all ſorts without doors.

The advantage of this regulation, in both its parts, ſeemed very evident. Education, it was ſaid, is all in all. Education makes the man, and makes the ſervant. It will therefore prepare them for their work. They will enter upon it expert and proven, very much to the public emolument; inſtead of being aukward and unhandy for ſome time, till experience has given them facility, or, perhaps, retaining ſome meaſure of ruſticity and inactivity through their whole lives.

It ſeemed alſo a matter of great moment, that no man ſhould be ſuffered to profeſs what he could not do, but that he ſhould be confined to that only which he could beſt do. Neither was it proper that this ſhould be left to the caprice of families, or the ambition and preſumption of the ſervants themſelves. And it was never once imagined the maſters of academies would be defective in *judgment* and *impartiality* on their part.

3. The third and laſt regulation he eſtabliſhed, was ordering the ſervants to be erected by charter into a large corporation, containing many ſmaller bodies and ſocieties within it. To this corporation he gave authority over the ſeveral members of which it was compoſed, and eſtabliſhed a complete ſubordination. This was thought a piece of admirable wiſdom and policy. They were to be ſtrictly watchful over one another, and it was ſuppoſed they would get all the advantage in this ſhape, which men united in ſociety have over thoſe in a ſtate of nature.—The ſeveral claſſes and diviſions of the

corporation were to try the ſufficiency of all ſervants, before they were admitted, and had power to turn them off when they miſbehaved or neglected their work. That this might proceed with the greater regularity, they were every one ſecured by law in their employments. They were not left in a vague dependant ſtate: a ſervant once hired by any family could not be turned away but by an order of his fellow-ſervants, to whom all complaints of his conduct were to be made, and by whom they were to be judged.

The whole was founded upon the moſt excellent reaſons. Who ſo proper to judge of the capacity and diligence of ſervants as thoſe who are ſervants themſelves? who can be ſuppoſed ſo attentive to their conduct, or ſo jealous of their behaviour, ſince the character of particulars muſt evidently reflect either diſgrace or credit on the whole collective body?

## CHAP. II.

### *Of the Effects produced by these Regulations.*

AT firſt, and indeed for a conſiderable time after theſe regulations were eſtabliſhed, experience ſeemed to confirm the wiſdom as well as generoſity of the prince, and to diſcover their happy conſequences every day. Servants were trained up and inſtructed in every branch of buſineſs, and were very expert in their work. They underſtood the

cauſe, the reaſon and the end of every thing, and could talk upon it, in a moſt intelligent and conſiſtent manner. They did every thing with much exactneſs, and had plainly a far greater air of neatneſs and elegance than formerly. The fields were dreſſed and trimmed to great perfection: the utenſils of the houſes were all brightened and put in order; the outſides of the houſes and avenues to them were all adorned in a very pretty and fanciful manner. They were not content with what was barely profitable to their maſters, but paid alſo a due regard to ſhow and appearance. Perſons who travelled were exceedingly delighted, and the proprietors were not a little proud of the change: for every houſe was like a little palace, and every country-ſeat like a little paradiſe. Thus far the ſervants ſeemed to be much upon their honour, and, from a ſenſe of gratitude to the emperor, endeavoured to behave themſelves with great care and diligence; ſo that every body, as well as themſelves, ſincerely rejoiced in the change of their ſtate.

But alas! how ſhort-ſighted are human creatures! this univerſal ſatisfaction did not laſt long. It was quickly ſeen, notwithſtanding ſo good a beginning, that the regulations laid down would but ill anſwer the end propoſed. The change to the worſe took its riſe from the enlargement of their wages, which yet ſeemed, at firſt, to be the chief and moſt reaſonable article of the regulations: for, after they had obtained good wages, and the beſt of food, and accommodation, ſome of them began to grow fat, and conſequently, lazy. When they were ſuddenly called, ſometimes by dozing and ſleeping they did not

hear at all; and when they did hear, were very ſlow in their motions, and always ready furniſhed with an excuſe for their neglect: or perhaps, raiſed ſome very ſtrong objections to what they were deſired to do. When they were ſent off an errand, they took a long time before they returned: and yet would poſitively ſtand to it, that it was impoſſible to return ſooner. If this was not ſatisfying, they would, in a great rage, before they delivered their meſſage, return and meaſure the ground they had traverſed, in order to determine the diſpute.

Having now more to eat and drink than formerly, they behoved to take more time to it; and ſo the hours of their work were very much diminiſhed. This ſeemed to them not only reaſonable, but neceſſary; and great diſputes aroſe upon it with the families in which they ſerved. The families in general, gave them to underſtand, that they expected greater diligence and activity, as they were now better paid than before, whereas the ſervants counted that highly ridiculous; for with them it was a fixed point, that the more liberally they were paid, they ought to do the leſs for it. It is needleſs to enlarge upon this part of the ſubject; let it ſuffice to ſay, that, in general, having now got ſo good proviſion made for them, they began not to ſerve, but to live. The delicacies of the world began to captivate their hearts, and inſtead of ſatisfying themſelves with neceſſaries, and being uſeful in their generation, they bethought themſelves of enjoying what had thus ſo luckily fallen to their ſhare.

Changes in all reſpects came on inſenſibly. It was before obſerved, that one advantage propoſed

by the regulations, was the increaſe of the number of ſervants. This effect indeed did follow with a witneſs. Whereas before the country was not overſtocked with ſervants, and families were at great pains in looking out for proper ones, now they increaſed almoſt to an incredible number. Not only was there a great confluence of ſtrangers from diſtant places, but many of the inhabitants, not inconſiderable in point of ſtation found it their intereſt to become ſervants. Now you would every where ſee them going about and ſoliciting employment, and very wonderful were the arts they ſometimes uſed to obtain it. Of theſe I ſhall ſay nothing in this preliminary part of the hiſtory, becauſe I ſhall probably have afterwards a better opportunity to introduce them.

As the ſtate of things and the way of thinking began to alter, the language and manner of ſpeaking altered alſo at the ſame time. In former times they uſed to ſpeak of getting a maſter, or being hired, or getting an employment; now they ſpake of getting into bread, of getting a ſalary, a ſettlement, or a living. I know nothing that reſembles this difference ſo much, as the difference between our way of ſpeaking in Scotland, and what is uſual in our neighbour country of England about ſervants. Here we ſpeak of a ſervant's getting into ſervice, in England they call it getting a place, and a footman turned away, they term with the higheſt propriety, a footman out of place.

Things having once come into this ſituation, it happened with theſe ſervants as it happens with all men when once they begin to gratify their deſires:

they become inordinate, exceſſive, and inſatiable. Inſtead of being content with what they had obtained, they began to fall upon all imaginable methods of increaſing their revenues. They contrived an infinite number of perquiſites beſides their ordinary wages. When a family had of their own free motion beſtowed any mark of favour upon a good ſervant, the thing was immediately ſpread abroad, and all other families were harraſſed with complaints, and teazed to death by their ſervants till the ſame was beſtowed upon them. They would often in a clandeſtine manner, lay hold of ſome of the goods of the family, and appropriate them to their own uſe; and, when it came at laſt to be diſcovered, they would take the advantage of their own covetouſneſs, and prove clearly, that by immemorial cuſtom it belonged to them as their due. Where families were ignorant, they would affirm with the greateſt boldneſs, that ſuch and ſuch were the privileges of ſervants in all other places, and by that means procure their conſent. When they were not only ignorant, but timid and cowardly, they would go a ſhort way to work, and threaten to burn their houſes to the ground if they did not comply with every demand.

But what they excelled moſt in were the arts of flattery and deceit in rich families. Such as got near great men, would ſtand as it were in perpetual admiration of the beauty of their perſons, the gracefulneſs of their manners, and the excellence of their underſtandings. The ſervants of ſome perſons of great rank, had a cuſtom of making up a long liſt every day, of the virtues which ſuch perſons had that

day put in practice, and reading it over to them next morning before they got out of bed, which was observed to render them quite facile and tractable for a long time after.

They perfuaded the credulous, that the public good was inſeparably connected with their thriving and opulence. "Induſtry," ſaid they, "is the ſource of wealth to a nation. Servants, every body muſt acknowledge, are the means of induſtry; thence it follows undeniably, that the more ſervants the better." By the help of this argument they obtained, that many new eſtabliſhments were made for ſervants. And ſuch was the faſcination that prevailed, that frequently there were ſettlements made for the proviſion of menial ſervants in a wilderneſs, where there was hardly a ſingle creature to ſerve; and of huſbandmen upon a ſea-ſhore, where there was not an inch of ground to cultivate. They alſo got about ſick and dying perſons, and by their officious ſervices, by tending them with apparent care, and by frequently and readily giving them cordials, they prevailed, that many left great legacies to them in their wills.

## CHAP. III.

*Continues the ſame Subject. And particularly gives an account of a very remarkable ſtep taken by the Servants.*

WHEN their poſſeſſions, privileges, and immunities were thus enlarged, they began to claim greater reſpect than formerly, and to aſ-

ſume additional titles and deſignations. Some of them would be no longer ſervants properly ſpeaking, but overſeers. They affirmed, that it was eſſential to the nature of ſervants, that ſome of them ſhould be overſeers, and that there could be neither order nor œconomy in a family without ſome ſuch. To this they added ſub-overſeers, and ſeveral other officers for their aſſiſtance. They then proceeded to arch-overſeers, who had all the other overſeers, as well as ſervants, under their juriſdiction. At a great meeting of the whole corporation, this was determined and decreed to be, and to have been, a part of the original inſtitution of ſervitude, without which it could not poſſibly ſubſiſt.

Theſe encroachments were very patiently ſubmitted to, and, one would think, had been carried as far as the nature of the thing would admit. Yet there remained one ſtep more which exceeded every thing that had been formerly ſeen, and happened as follows. An overſeer of the capital city gathered a great many of his contemporaries about him, and after begging their moſt ſerious attention to a propoſal he had to lay before them, made a ſpeech to the following purpoſe. "Honoured and very dear Brethren, You know that the life of ſociety is order, and the ſoul of order is ſubordination. The greateſt ſervice, therefore, that we can do to our corporation, is to keep up the ſubordination of officers among us with as much ſtrictneſs, and to make it as complete and extenſive as poſſible. There are no ſtructures which ſtand ſo ſecurely, as thoſe that are built in the form of a cone or a pyramid, becauſe they have a broad baſe, and gradually

leſſen towards the top. Neither of theſe, however is complete, but maimed or imperfect, unleſs it be carried on till it terminate in a point. Therefore, the ſubordination of our ſociety can never be entire and perfect, till it end in a ſingle perſon, who may unite the whole, and enjoy abſolute uncontrolable dominion. And, as the perſon who is on the top of a pyramid, muſt neceſſarily ſee farther than thoſe who ſtand upon any of the lower ſteps of it, ſo the perſon who is at the head of the whole ſociety of ſervants muſt, in virtue of his office, ſurpaſs them all in wiſdom and ſagacity. Nay, as this order is of the inſtitution of nature, and as a laſt reſort or ſupreme judge is neceſſary to determine controverſies in any ſociety, ſo I do think it may be proved, that nature, to be uniform and conſiſtent in her operations, muſt immediately inſpire the perſon ſo exalted, with infallible knowledge, and a ſort of infinite mind. Now, I hope it is very plain, that I myſelf am the perſon to whom, and to my ſucceſſors in office, this power and authority do of right belong."

One of the aſſembly then riſes up and ſays, "I greatly ſuſpect this will be attended with no good effects upon the intereſt of the ſervants in general, not to mention the intereſt of the families, which, from a ſenſe of duty to the corporation, I entirely give up. At any rate, it ought not to be gone into precipitately; for it is a prodigious innovation." "Quite otherwiſe," ſays the former ſpeaker; "for though I have condeſcended to reaſon with you, and ſhow you that in the nature of things, there muſt be one wholike the top ſtone of a pyramid, is incumbent on the whole body; as alſo, that this can be no other

than myſelf, who dwell in the centre of this vaſt empire; yet I can give undeniable evidence, that it hath been always ſo in fact, ſince there was an empire here, and ſince there were ſervants." The objector then ſhook his head, as who ſhould ſay that is far from being a clear point, and ſeemed to wonder from whence this evidence was to proceed. The other immediately goes on, "It is as clear as the ſun; for though all the records that contained this regulation are loſt, yet I very well remember that my nurſe told me before I was two years of age, that her grandmother's ſiſter's couſin-german aſſured her it was fact."

However unwilling, one would think, men ſhould be to give up their natural rights, and ſubmit to uſurped authority, yet ſo it was that they ſoon agreed to this ſcheme; and, indeed, it appeared to have been not ill projected for their own ends. It is not to be conceived at how ſpeedy a pace they advanced, in acquiring and extending their dominion. They quite inverted the uſe of language; for when they ſpoke of the family they always meant the ſervants; or, if they ſaid any thing would tend to the good of the family, it was to be underſtood, that it would promote the increaſe of the wages, privileges, and immunities of the ſervants. In many places the ſervants grew upon the families, and turned them out altogether. In ſome of the moſt delicious ſpots of the country, you would have ſeen fine ſeats and incloſures wholly poſſeſſed by ſervants, who abſolutely refuſed to do any work, but gave themſelves up to lazy contemplation. If any body had preſumed to aſk them the meaning of this, they ſaid they

were employed in ſtudying the theory of ſervice, and wiſhing that all ſervants might be good, and all families well ſupplied.

It has been obſerved above, that they began their ſcheme by flattering the rich and great men, and endeavouring to inſinuate themſelves into their favour. But as ſoon as their power was ſufficiently eſtabliſhed, they changed their note, and treated the moſt conſiderable men of the country with great haughtineſs and contempt. They affirmed it to be abſolutely neceſſary for the public good, that they ſhould have much more honour and reſpect paid them. That, as they were undeniably the moſt uſeful rank of men by conſequence they were the moſt honourable. Inſtead of being humble and ſubmiſſiye, they inſiſted, that all the people, from the higheſt to the loweſt, ſhould pay a profound reſpect to the overſeers, arch-overſeers, and other dignitaries, whoſe names I have forgot, becauſe they had neither ſenſe nor meaning. Nay, the emperor of the ſervants arrived in time at ſuch power, that he made the richeſt men in the country, even the governors of provinces to tremble. He ordered them ſometimes to wipe his ſhoes; and, when they miſbehaved or ſhowed the leaſt backwardneſs, commanded them to be whipt.

When my informer mentioned this circumſtance, I could not help diſcovering much amazement at the puſillanimity of theſe people, and even modeſtly hinted ſome ſuſpicion as to the truth of the fact. He inſiſted, however, in the moſt poſitive manner, on the truth of his account, and added, that he had many things ſtill more wonderful to communicate; as an inſtance of which he affirmed, that it was not

only usual for the emperor to order great men to be whipt, but even to command them to whip themselves. All this they were obliged to submit to, for he had the lower servants, and the whole kingdom absolutely under his influence. If any person or family had disputed his will in the least article, they would either, without more ado, burn the house and them in it, or they would wholly give over work, and neither provide them with food nor fuel, so that they behoved immediately to starve.

What contributed not a little to establish this usurpation, was a very singular scheme which they fell upon while they were flattering great men, and persuading them to make new establishments for servants. This was, that families should not be permitted to choose servants for themselves, but that a lord or any other great man, should have the power of nominating the servants within a certain district. They never failed to invent plausible reasons for all their schemes. In support of this it was alledged, that families were often whimsical in their choice. That some would prefer a servant because he was tall, and others because he was short; some because his hair was red, others because it was black. That they did not know when they were well served, and when they were not. That they were apt to be imposed on by such as had smooth tongues and could flatter them. That, if families and servants were in a good understanding, they would raise sedition and subvert the constitution.

On the other hand it was thought exceeding clear, that great men would understand the interest of the country, and the capacity of servants, much

better than the vulgar. As alſo, that they were above all ſuſpicion of partiality, and would be ſure always to ſend fit and accompliſhed ſervants to every houſe. But alas! the contrary of all this was ſoon found by experience. They learned ſpeedily to ſell every place to the higheſt bidder, unleſs when they had a favourite or dependant to gratify, which indeed at bottom was the ſame thing. However, they were ſoon made dupes to the ſervants, for when the profit of this ſale was found out, the overſeers and arch-overſeers gradually uſurped the nomination to themſelves, and at laſt it came to be made an addition to the great and overgrown power of the emperor.

It may eaſily be ſuppoſed things were now in a ſad ſituation, and they continued ſo, as tradition and written records aſſure us, for many ages. The lands lay uncultivated; the people were reduced to the greateſt miſery imaginable; they were ſorrily clothed, and worſe fed. No body proſpered but the ſervants, or rather, only the upper ranks of them, the noble and honourable ſervants, the overſeers and arch-overſeers. To theſe indeed may be added the idle and ſpeculative ſort, who were ſettled in hives, in the moſt pleaſant and fruitful vallies, in every province. As for the poorer or loweſt claſs of ſervants, who actually did any work for the families, they were as much oppreſſed, by this time, as their maſters. Their wages were moſtly taken up by lazy overſeers, or exhauſted by heavy taxes which they were obliged to pay to the emperor, and his court.

## CHAP. IV.

*A terrible Blow given to the Domination of the Servants; and particularly to the Power of the Emperor.*

IT appears to be a fact, though not very well accounted for by philoſophers, that, when men have been long accuſtomed to ſlavery, they hug their chains, and become ſo blinded, as to pride themſelves in their miſery itſelf. A poor peaſant, in a neighbouring country, whoſe face is pale with hunger, and his family ſcarce covered with rags, through the oppreſſion of his prince, yet will be very ready to venture his life in vindication of the tyrant's honour, and count himſelf extremely happy to lay it down in defence of his perſon. So it happened with the people under conſideration. They were ſo deluded by theſe ſervants, that, as their condition, ſo their reaſon itſelf was turned upſide down. They gloried in the uſurpation of the ſervants over them, worſhipped them often as they paſſed, and ſtoutly defended all their rights and privileges.

If by chance it happened, (as there were always ſome in every age) that one thought fit to complain of the ſloth, debauchery, avarice and tyranny of the ſervants, his brethren immediately raiſed a hideous accuſation againſt him, and the ſtupid people generally joined in the cry. They immediately aſſiſted his fellow-ſervants to ſeize him, to impriſon him, and, according to the degree of his offence, to puniſh him.

They firſt, indeed, took the moſt charitable pains to convince him of his error. If upon this, he was willing to recant, and ſolemnly to declare that the conduct of the ſervants was admirable, and the character of them all unblameable, he was diſmiſſed only with a good beating. But, if he was obſtinate, and inſiſted on telling the truth, he was carried to a dreadful ſubterraneous place, and there put to the moſt horrid and ſhocking tortures, which at length ended in death.

However, at laſt, this myſtery of iniquity got a terrible blow. One of the lower ſervants, of an honeſt heart, and a determined reſolute temper, being filled with indignation at the oppreſſion which the reſt were guilty of, ſet himſelf to open the eyes of the public, and expoſe their wickedneſs. He made a full diſcovery of all the frauds he had any how been acquainted with, and ſpared not the corruption of the emperor's court. Laying down only this plain principle, that ſervants were obliged to promote at all times the real intereſt of their maſters, he ſet the abominable conduct of the covetous blood-ſuckers in the moſt odious light. Whenever he went to a fair, or other place of public concourſe, he would get upon an eminence, and, in a long diſcourſe, endeavour to rouſe the people from their lethargy, and inflame them with reſentment againſt their oppreſſors.

This furniſhed his brethren with an opportunity of repreſenting him as a diſturber of the peace, and loading him with innumerable calumnies. Many tumults were raiſed againſt him, and he was often in imminent danger of his life. When he had nar-

rowly eſcaped being ſtoned in public, they would often hire deſperadoes to aſſaſſinate him in private; and ſometimes attempted to bribe his intimate friends to take him off by poiſon. However, by a mixture of bravery and caution in himſelf, together with the aſſiſtance of ſome faithful friends, who ſaw how much he was promoting their intereſt, or rather, by a moſt ſingular providence, he was always brought off ſafe. At laſt, a few of the other ſervants joined him, and they together opened the eyes of ſeveral provinces of the empire. Theſe came to a formal reſolution of caſting off the yoke of the emperor, and ſettling the ſervants upon a quite new, or rather bringing them back to the old, reaſonable, and natural foundation.

This was not brought about without a moſt violent and pertinacious oppoſition. The emperor immediately ſounded the alarm, and ſet the ſervants in motion throughout all his dominions. He could not be ſuppoſed, indeed, to look upon ſuch a ſcheme with indifference; for it plainly tended to ſtrip him of a great part of his revenue and power: nor was it eaſy to ſee where it would ſtop. He therefore cried out againſt it with all his might. He ſent out a proclamation, in which he affirmed hat it ſtruck againſt the very being of ſervants, and that the deſign was no leſs than to exterminate them from the face of the earth. He repreſented it as the moſt unnatural thing that ever was heard of. That there had been ſometimes conſpiracies of ſervants againſt their maſters, but a joint conſpiracy of maſters againſt their own ſervants, and of ſervants againſt their fellow-ſervants, was abſolutely

without precedent. He concluded with a ſolemn execration, devoting all who ſhould continue in this rebellion to complete and irretrievable ruin.

The conſequence of this was a civil war in the kingdom. Many battles were fought, in which there was dreadful ſlaughter on both ſides, and multitudes taken priſoners, who were none of them uſed very well. The emperor indeed, and his court, had a manifeſt advantage, by long practice, in deviſing the moſt exquiſite methods of revenge and cruelty. But, to ſhorten my narrative: After many violent and bloody diſputes, as well as uſeleſs conferences, at laſt ſome provinces agreed to keep the old way, and ſome eſtabliſhed the new. Particularly, in one Northern province there was at the time of the change, a moſt excellent method and order eſtabliſhed with regard to the ſervants. They not only renounced the authority of the emperor; but all overſeers, arch-overſeers, auditors, controllers, accountants, keepers of records, and other unneceſſary officers were baniſhed at once, and none ſuffered to continue but uſeful working ſervants. The ſpeculative drones were expelled, and their lands given to perſons of rank and worth in the province. That regulation was aboliſhed, as extremely pernicious, which permitted lords or great men to name ſervants to others, ſo that every family choſe ſuch as beſt pleaſed themſelves, and ſuch as were well qualified for the buſineſs for which they were hired. The exorbitant increaſe of their wages was reduced as well as all extravagant perquiſites, and only a moderate proviſion continued and ſettled.

## CHAP. V.

*Some account of the Reformed Establishment, in a Northern Province; and the happy effects that followed upon it for a time. It begins, however, again to degenerate.*

THE people of this province were now so fully convinced of the terrible consequences of the late usurpation, that they resolved to use all possible precautions, to prevent the return of corruption for the future. In this the servants themselves seemed to concur very heartily, and were apparently animated with a warm zeal against the worthless part of their own order. Many excellent rules were laid down in the meetings of the corporation. They were ordered under the severest penalties to apply themselves diligently to their business; to live sober, grave, and mortified lives; to forbear all ranting, junketing, and gaming. They were forbid all travelling abroad, or wandering from their families, but upon urgent occasions, and with leave asked and given. If any were convicted of dishonesty, laziness, or disobedience, they were not only dismissed, but stript of their clothes, branded in their foreheads, and declared utterly incapable of ever being again employed.

The greatest strictness imaginable was used in trying them, as to their sufficiency in every branch of business for which they were hired; and very di-

ligent inquiry made into their character for honeſty and ſincerity. When they were introduced to any family, they were ſolemnly bound by a tremendous oath, to have the good of the family always at heart, and that they ſhould never do any thing, directly or indirectly, that might tend to its prejudice. But above all, there was a ſtrict law made, and declared to be unalterable, that no ſervant ſhould be forced upon any family againſt their will. In order to ſecure, in the moſt effectual manner, the execution of theſe laws, it was reſolved, that, in the government of the corporation, there ſhould be joined with the ſervants certain perſons of the moſt prudent ſort from the families. Theſe were called helpers, they had no ſalaries, but being naturally a ſort of repreſentatives of the people, it was expected they would univerſally ſupport their intereſt.

For a long time this province was exceeding happy in their reformed conſtitution. The moſt perfect harmony ſubſiſted between maſters and ſervants. The work of the ſervants ſeemed to be a pleaſure to them, and, on the other hand, the members of every family ſeemed to vie with one another who ſhould treat their ſervants with the greateſt tenderneſs and humanity. Once or twice there was an attempt made to introduce overſeers and arch-overſeers among them, from a neighbouring province which had retained theſe officers, though they would not ſuffer them to be ſubject to the emperor. However, the people ſhowing a proper ſpirit, they were ſtill thrown out. All this time, matters went on exceedingly well, the fields

were aſſiduouſly cultivated, and brought every year immenſe crops; and plenty as well as harmony was every where to be ſeen.

But alas! after a long ſeaſon of peace and quiet, things began to alter for the worſe. Ambition, avarice, and luxury, would not be kept out by the baniſhment of the old titles. They found a way of introducing themſelves, under cover of the form that then prevailed, without any apparent change. The moſt important ſtep towards bringing this about, was re-eſtabliſhing the law which empowered great men to nominate ſervants to inferior families. This was ſubmitted to the more eaſily, becauſe they only nominated them to the ſalary, provided that the corporation ſhould think proper to introduce them to the family. For this purpoſe, the moſt ſacred laws required an invitation from the family itſelf. But the young ſervants ſoon began to find, that it was far eaſier for many of them to play the paraſite or ſycophant about great mens houſes, that they might procure a writ of nomination, than to acquire a good reputation for diligence in their work. That was the road, therefore, in which the greateſt part of them travelled to preferment.

Many and fierce were the ſtruggles, for ſeveral years, in the meetings of the corporation about introducing ſervants to families. As all the laws required an invitation from the family, when any perſon was nominated, a neighbouring court would ſend a deputation to the family, to aſk them whether they would take ſuch a one for their ſervant or not. Sometimes they wheedled and flattered, and ſometimes threatened them, if they would not comply. If

any conſented, their names were ſet down three or four times, to ſwell the number: if any were angry and ſpoke impertinently, they were ſuppoſed to be out of their ſenſes, and incapable of judging. After theſe arts were uſed, they would ſit down gravely to determine the matter, and *find*, that there was in this inſtance a moſt agreeable and harmonious invitation.

It is impoſſible to help ſmiling, when one reflects upon the various methods uſed in conducting this buſineſs.—Sometimes they could not get a ſingle perſon in a houſe to accept of the ſervant who had been nominated. When this happened, they uſed to ſend for all the relations of the family, even the moſt diſtant couſins, and aſk their conſent, which was eaſily obtained, becauſe it was nothing to them whether the family were well ſerved or ill.—When they had obtained it, if a complaint was made, they endeavoured to prove, by very ingenious reaſonings, that theſe diſtant relations had as good a title to invite a ſervant as any perſon whatever. Matters however, drove on very heavily for a while; but in order to facilitate them, many gentlemen of eſtates, who knew not much either about ſervice or ſervants, procured themſelves to be choſen to the office of helpers. Not that they helped to do any thing: but, getting in to be members of the courts of the corporation, they contributed to provide ſervants in places. By this means many were provided with a piece of bread, who had been poor ſneaking fellows, and had followed them in their youth, in hunting, fiſhing, and other diverſions.

Such was the ſituation of affairs when my informer

went into the country, and, as the caſe was very ſingular, the reader may eaſily gueſs how much it engaged his attention. He reſided chiefly in this Northern province, and, therefore, his remarks were moſtly confined to what happened among them. It would be endleſs to mention all that he told me, but the principal obſervations ſhall be communicated to the world in the following chapters.

## CHAP. VI.

*Of the great impropriety often seen in the appointment of servants; and the sentiments of the inhabitants on that subject.*

THERE is commonly, in every ſociety, ſome radical principle which governs and modifies the reſt, and gives a tincture to all the meaſures that are carried on, whatever be their particular ſubject, or ſeeming intention. In the caſe before us, the fundamental error appears to have been the power of nomination which was given to great men. The conſequence of this was, an exceſſive impropriety in the appointment of ſervants to different families. If a poor ordinary family wanted a houſehold ſervant, ſometimes a Lord would ſend them a foreign cook out of his own kitchen. This fellow would ſpeak ſuch minced broken language, that they could not underſtand him; and the meat he dreſſed for them they could not endure to look upon. When they deſired him to provide plain ſolid food, ſuch as they had been in uſe to eat, and in ſufficient

quantity to fill their bellies, he would ſerve them up a courſe of flimſy diſhes, finely garniſhed, but entirely diſguiſed, ſo that the poor people could not imagine what they contained. If at any time they made complaint of this, he triumphed over their clowniſh ignorance and unrefined taſte, and would offer to prove to the ſatisfaction of all men of ſenſe, that he perfectly underſtood his art.

In innumerable ſuch inſtances they went entirely in the face of common ſenſe, in the choice and appointment of ſervants. Sometimes, if a family wanted a plowman or a gardener, they would ſend them a huntſman, or a running footman. If a conſiderable merchant wanted a book-keeper, they would find him a ſtupid ignorant fellow who could neither write nor read. For this prepoſterous conduct there was no remedy. The great men counted the right of nomination as a precious jewel, which no conſideration could induce them to part with. And as the power of determination, in all diſputed caſes, lay in courts compoſed of ſervants, they ſtrenuouſly ſupported the moſt unreaſonable appointments. This was naturally to be expected, becauſe a contrary conduct would have been a ſilent impeachment of many of themſelves, as unfit for their preſent ſtations.

Beſides, it happened in this caſe, as I obſerved had happened in a former age, many loved to have it ſo. The people of better rank, and thoſe who would be thought to be of better rank, by an unaccountable faſcination, not only approved, but admired theſe meaſures. To allow families, they ſaid, to chooſe ſervants for themſelves, would be a ſource

of endleſs confuſion, but that the preſent was plainly a ſimple, rational, uniform, and peaceable method of proceeding. It was a common and a faſhionable topic of converſation, to deſpiſe the folly and impudence of the common people, who had always a ſtrong inclination to chooſe their own ſervants, and looked with a very evil eye upon thoſe who were thus billeted upon them againſt their wills. If any perſon, in a company, had but ſignified that he thought this conduct inconſiſtent with equity or good policy, he was not thought fit to be reaſoned with, but a great and loud laugh was immediately raiſed againſt him, ſo that he was not only put to ſilence, but to confuſion. Nay, there were not wanting many who affirmed, that no body could be ſincerely of that opinion, but that it was only pretended, from baſe and ſiniſter views.

I muſt obſerve here, that when my informer was on this part of the ſubject, which indeed he often reſumed, as what had made a great impreſſion upon his own mind, I could not help again diſcovering marks of aſtoniſhment. I told him, I very well knew the abſurdities of which the human mind is capable, yet this ſeemed to be the moſt incredible of any thing that I had ever read or heard of; that it ſhould be laughed down as a ridiculous notion, that families ought to be at liberty to chooſe their own ſervants. On this he was not a little offended, and ſpeaking with ſome acrimony, ſays, "It was to gratify your curioſity, Sir, that, in this and former converſations, I have given an account of my obſervations in foreign countries. If you deſire to hear no more, I ſhall be wholly ſilent; but give me leave

to ſay, that the treatment which we travellers meet with when we return home, is at once unreaſonable and ungrateful. If we tell you things that are common, you look upon them as inſipid and trifling; and, if we tell you things that are quite new and ſurpriſing, you let us know with great good manners, that you do not believe us."

Then after a little pauſe, "Pray Sir," ſays he, "how many nations are there in Europe, Aſia, or Africa, who think themſelves at liberty to chooſe their own prince, or to bring him to an account for oppreſſion or bad government." Truly, ſaid I, I believe not above five or ſix. "Well then," ſays he, "if, perhaps, fifty to one of mankind, have thought it a ſin or folly for them to chooſe their own maſters, is it modeſt in you to ſuſpect my veracity, when I tell you of one nation, where it became faſhionable to think that they ought not to chooſe their own ſervants."

"But to come a little cloſer to the point," ſays he, "are you not a member of the ſelect ſociety in E————h?" I am, and glory in it as a moſt honourable diſtinction. "Have you not taken agriculture under your patronage?" Undoubtedly; and by what means can we better promote the intereſt of the public? "By none, I admit. But ſuffer me to proceed with my interrogatories. Have you bought any land with the profits of your improvements?" Not yet. They are but in their infancy, and have coſt me a great deal of expence. "Are the crops of improvers generally better than thoſe of other people?" I cannot ſay they are. "You ought," ſays he, "to have confeſſed that they are

commonly worſe; for, according to my obſervation, the mark of an improver is not to have a good crop, but to be able to give a rational and philoſophical account how he came to have a bad one. But have you not alſo encouraged a man to write books, and read lectures upon agriculture, who made himſelf a beggar by putting it in practice?" Perhaps it may be ſo, but he underſtood the theory. "How came you to believe that he underſtood the theory? Alas! alas! Sir, abſurdities coming into faſhion is not ſo rare a thing at home, as to entitle you to doubt the truth of my narrative, when I told you of the miſtakes and deluſions of a certain people abroad."

I confeſs I was never more nettled at any thing, than at this unexpected attack upon the laudable attempts among us, of late, to improve our native country. To compare them with the monſtrous conduct of the unpoliſhed American people deſcribed in this book, was unſufferable. I could not, therefore, let the matter drop, but told him, All that you have ſaid, Sir, might eaſily be anſwered; however, not to ſpend time upon it at preſent, what do you think of, or what have you to ſay againſt the excellent and rational tracts which have been publiſhed by private gentlemen of fortune among us, upon agriculture? Do they not contain the cleareſt arithmetical calculations, of the profit to ariſe from the method laid down? "I ſay," anſwered he, "they are all what the lawyers call *felo de ſe*, and totally inadmiſſible." Your reaſon, pray. "My reaſon! why, truly, I have more reaſons than one. In the *firſt* place, they always put me in mind of a quack doctor with his *catholicon*. They have but

one remedy for all diſeaſes. A gentleman happens to be ſtruck with ſome new theoretical principle, and immediately falls to work, runs down every thing elſe, and applies this wonderful diſcovery to all purpoſes, all ſoils, and all ſeaſons. You know what enthuſiaſts the horſe hoers and pulveriſers are. Many of them are clearly of opinion, that dung is prejudicial to ground, as ſerving only to engender weeds. I was once quite of this opinion myſelf. and found no other difficulty in it, than how gentlemen and farmers would get quit of their dung, which, not being returned to the ground in the way of manure, muſt ſoon grow up to an enormous, and at the ſame time, moſt nauſeous and offenſive heap. When under theſe apprehenſions, I remember to have projected a ſcheme to be carried on by ſubſcription, which would have proved an effectual remedy. The method was to have plans taken of every county, in which the level ſhould be marked, then canals to be carried through all the low grounds, and ſmaller ducts drawn from every gentleman and farmer's houſe, terminating in theſe canals, which, by the help of a collection of rain water at every houſe, would, at certain ſeaſons of the year, carry away the whole dung, and at laſt empty it into the ſea. The expence of this ſcheme would, indeed, have been very conſiderable; but the great advantages to be reaped from it, I apprehended, would ſoon convince every body of its utility. Now, however ridiculous ſuch a ſcheme may be, I am fully convinced it would have been put in practice in a certain county, if it had not been for the incorrigible obſtinacy of the common people. I am alſo of opi-

nion, that it would have ſucceeded, and that dung would have been wholly baniſhed in a ſhort time. This would have happened, not only by the help of the canals, but the crops would have been ſo thin and ſpiritual, that the cattle who fed upon them would have paſſed very little of a groſs or excremental nature.

"I ſhall not trouble you, continued he, at this time, with any more of my reaſons but one. It ſeems highly incredible, that if the new ſchemes of agriculture were ſo profitable as their authors give out, they would be ſo generous as to diſcover them gratis to the public, and even preſs the ſaid public to accept of them. It is more probable they would keep them as a ſecret in their own families, till their excellence were diſcovered by their viſible effects. I know a manufacturing town, where, if any man fall upon a method of working, or a fabric of goods, that is likely to bring a good profit, he is ſo far from preſſing it upon his neighbours, that he uſes every poſſible precaution to keep it to himſelf. On the other hand, his neighbours are as inquiſitive as he is ſecret; and commonly both diſcover and imitate it in a very little time. There is a diſpoſition in mankind to reſiſt what is forced upon them, and to leave no method uneſſayed to come at what is induſtriouſly placed out of their reach.

"I would, therefore, humbly recommend it to all improvers, to give over talking upon the ſubject, and to fall heartily about putting their rules in practice: and, I can promiſe them, that if they be ſucceſsful, it will not be long before they will be quite common. Or, let every perſon who diſcovers

a noſtrum in agriculture, apply to the government for a patent that no body may be ſuffered to uſe it except himſelf, and thoſe who ſhall pay him ſufficiently for the ingenuity of his invention. I can aſſure you, ſir, that if I had ſaid to the people whom I left a few years ago, that I knew a nation, where it was common for benevolent perſons to point out to them plain, eaſy, cheap, and certain methods of growing rich, but they would not be perſuaded to uſe them, I would have had the ſame compliment paid me, which you were pleaſed to pay me ſome time ago, that I was taking the privilege of a traveller."

I ſhall not trouble the reader with ſaying how far I was convinced by this reaſoning, only it made me reſolve to be entirely ſilent, as to any further particulars I ſhould learn concerning the corporation of ſervants, how ſtrange and unaccountable ſoever they might be. Having therefore, brought this unavoidable digreſſion to a cloſe, we proceed with the hiſtory.

## CHAP. VII.

### *Great partiality in the trial of Servants, and uncertainty in the characters given of them.*

IF the reader recollects what was ſaid in the preceding chapter, it is probable he will be ſurpriſed, that the corporation, with the powers given them, did not, for their own credit, look better into the qualifications of ſervants. Since it was in

their power to licenſe them or not, it may be ſuppoſed they would take effectual care, that no inſufficient perſon ſhould be admitted. But it is to be obſerved, that ſo ſoon as the method of fixing ſervants, upon the nomination of lords or great men, came to be again in uſe, the trial of their ſufficiency turned to a mere farce. There might be ſome degree of integrity found in one court; but, in ſuch a caſe, candidates had nothing to do but apply to another, where he would find, perhaps a ſet of raſcally fellows who were aſhamed of nothing. To what a degree of boldneſs they ventured to proceed, may be ſeen from the following account of what literally happened.

A certain court was going upon the examination of a young man, who deſired to have a certificate that he was fully accompliſhed as a ſervant, and particularly well ſkilled in the cultivation of land. A grave and ancient member aſked him, Pray, ſir, what is the beſt way of plowing hard ſtiff land? *Anſ.* By running a wheel barrow over it. The examinator was highly offended with the abſurdity of the anſwer, and ſhowed plainly in his countenance a mixture of ſurprize and indignation. But another member of court, being of a meek and gentle temper, and a great enemy to ſeverity, thought proper to interpoſe. He ſays to his brother, My dear ſir, the young man is modeſt and baſhful, which in itſelf is a moſt amiable diſpoſition, though it hinders him from anſwering ſo diſtinctly, as were to be wiſhed. Then, turning to the candidate, he ſays, I dare ſay, ſir, you know well enough that a wheel-barrow cannot plough

land, becauſe it will not enter into the ſoil, nor open it ſufficiently. Muſt not hard ſtiff land be broken and pulveriſed, in order to make it fruitful? *Anſ.* Yes, ſir.

Then the firſt reſumed his examination. Now, pray ſir, Can you tell me how deep land ought to be ploughed when it is well done? He, though quite ignorant of the ſubject, being naturally a man of mettle and acuteneſs, imagined, from what he had heard, that the deeper the better, and immediately anſwered, ſix yards. On this his examinator fell into a violent paſſion, and ſaid, How have you the impudence, ſir, to aſk us to inſtal you as a ploughman when you know nothing of the matter? Was there ever ſuch a thing heard or ſeen ſince the beginning of the world, as ploughing land ſix yards deep? or what conception could you have, in your own mind, of the poſſibility of the thing? You ought to have a ſentence paſſed againſt you, wholly incapacitating you for any place in this country.

The noble and generous ſpirit of the candidate was rouſed by this ſevere treatment; ſo, he replied, Pray ſir, do you imagine that, in this improved age the ſervants of the eſtabliſhed corporation are brought up to a thorough knowledge of the ſeveral branches of buſineſs, for which the ſalaries are appointed? For my own particular part, you ought not to be ſurpriſed that I could not tell you how land ſhould be ploughed, for I never ſaw a plough in my life. How, when, where and by whom were you educated then? ſays the other in amaze. *Anſ.* I ſerved an apprenticeſhip in a toy-ſhop. Very

well, says the examinator, blessed, precious, happy improved times! I have no more to add, I give up the examination to any body that pleases.

When this discontented zealot had dropt the discourse, some other moderate man asked him a few polite and fashionable questions, such as, what is the genteelest lining for a red coat? in what manner should you present a glass of wine to a lord, and how to a farmer? whether is hunting or fishing the pleasantest diversion? whether should the servants or the children of a family have the best lodging, diet, &c.? After a few minutes had been spent in this manner, it was carried by a great majority that he had answered extremely well, and was in every respect a most accomplished servant.

It was usual for the servants to carry certificates with them, from the inferior courts of the corporation, wherever they went; but if any man had trusted to these certificates, he would have found himself miserably mistaken. They had taken up a principle, that a man might attest any thing to be true, which he did not know to be false. On this principle, for a proper consideration, a vagrant fellow, of whom they knew little or nothing, would easily obtain a certificate declaring him to be a complete servant for every branch of business, and in particular, an admirable cook, gardener, or whatever else he himself desired to be specified. If, upon trial, he was found totally deficient in any of the branches mentioned, and complaint was made to the court who certified for him, they thought they were fully excused if they could say, that upon their honour they knew nothing about him, and were

wholly ignorant whether he was a good ſervant or a bad. On all ſuch occaſions they uſed to launch out in praiſe of charity, and alledge, that every man had a right to another's good word, as far as it would go, unleſs he had forfeited it by ſome particular and known misdemeanor.

## CHAP. VIII.

*Servants of different characters. A sketch of the good and bad. The inveterate hatred of the bad against the good.*

HOWEVER general the corruption was, the reader is not to imagine that all ſervants were of the ſame character, or behaved in the ſame manner. There were ſtill ſome, here and there, who acted in a manner ſuitable to their ſtation, who minded their buſineſs, loved their maſters, and were beloved by them. Theſe made as great a ſtruggle as they could to keep matters right in the meetings of the corporation, though, commonly with very indifferent ſucceſs. The oppoſite principles and conduct of the two ſorts may be learned from the following particulars.

They differed, *toto cœlo*, in their very profeſſion and manner of ſpeaking. The modern faſhionable party affirmed, that courage and ſelf-ſufficiency ought to be the leading character of a ſervant. That he ought always to be ſpeaking in praiſe of his own deeds. That he ought never to allow of any error or miſtake in his behaviour; but on the contrary,

to inſiſt that he deſerved the higheſt approbation. Who is obliged, ſaid they, to ſpeak well of a man who ſpeaks ill of himſelf? can there be any thing more puſillanimous, than for a ſervant to be always confeſſing that he can do very little to any purpoſe?

On the other hand, the honeſter ſort of ſervants declared, that they thought pride and confidence were in themſelves hateful, and quite intolerable in ſervants. That they ſhould not make high pretenſions, leſt they ſhould be brought but to the greater ſhame; that they ſhould acknowledge the great imperfection of every thing they did, and expect to be rewarded, not for the worth or value of their ſervice, but from the goodneſs and indulgence of their maſters.

It was curious to obſerve the different effects of theſe principles. Thoſe who ſpoke in the higheſt terms of their own qualifications, were always the moſt negligent and moſt unfaithful. They grudged every thing they did, and laid hold of innumerable pretences for ſhortening their hours of labour, and procuring days of relaxation. If, at any time, one of them had done a piece of work in a tolerable manner, he could hardly be brought to do any more for two days; but was wholly taken up in admiring his own ingenuity, aud commending it to all who would take the pains to liſten to him. On the contrary, the humble and ſelf-denied were always buſy, applied themſelves to their duty with the utmoſt care and aſſiduity, and thought they could never do enough. They never once called in queſtion the hours of labour, but conſidered the neceſſity of the family, or the importance of the work they were en-

gaged in. When any body happened to commend one of them for his diligence, he entreated them to forbear ſuch diſcourſe, for he was very ſenſible he had not done the thouſandth part of what he ought to have done.

Men came to be ſo ſenſible of the different effects of theſe principles, that almoſt every family earneſtly wiſhed to have ſervants of the ſelf-denying character, and perfectly hated the other. If they entered into converſation with an unknown ſervant, they were particularly attentive to the ſtrain of his diſcourſe, and though he were upon his guard, would with great ſagacity penetrate his ſentiments. But, alas! this ſerved very little purpoſe; for, if he had intereſt to procure a writ of nomination, they were obliged to receive him, and then being fixed in the ſaddle, he made a full diſcovery of both his principles and practice.

Nothing was more remarkable than the rancorous hatred which the ſelf-ſufficient bore to the humble ſervants; eſpecially ſuch as ſhowed the moſt remarkable diligence in their work. They ſpread ſlanders againſt them without number. They uſed to go about with indefatigable diligence, among the great men, and nominators to the eſtabliſhed ſalaries, to exaſperate their minds againſt them, and prevent their ſettlement or promotion. They repreſented them as a ſet of poor, ſilly, ſneaking, ſpiritleſs fellows, who, for no other end than to throw an odium on the more free and generous livers, would work longer than uſual. For the ſame reaſon, it was pretended, that, when the reſt were at their paſtime, running, jumping, or cudgel playing,

then to be ſure, theſe hypocrites would be driving a ſtake, or pruning a tree about a farm, or picking weeds from a garden or field of corn. They repreſented them, alſo, (which was indeed partly true) as acquiring a ſtiff ruſtic air, by often ſtooping, and habitual application to their work.

Neither were they wanting in executing their revenge againſt their enemies themſelves, whenever an opportunity offered. If two or three of the looſer ſort met, by chance, one of the induſtrious in a ſolitary place, or going of an errand, they cunningly ſolicited him to join with them in ſome diverſion, for example, blind-man's-buff, or any other. If he complied, they all conſpired againſt him, and drubbed him heartily: and after they had done ſo, one was immediately diſpatched to inform againſt him, and let the family he belonged to know how he had been ſpending his time, ſo that he was no better than his neighbours. Whenever they diſcovered a ſervant in a field after the uſual time of labour, they would get behind the hedges and pelt him unmercifully with ſtones, ſo that he returned home, not only fatigued with his work, but ſeverely ſmarting with the wounds he had received.

Such was not only the conduct of individuals, but the very ſame ſpirit prevailed in the meetings of the corporation, from the loweſt to the higheſt. None met with ſo ſevere treatment from them as honeſt induſtrious ſervants, who were beloved in the families where they were placed; neither was there any crime ſo heinous as being more diligent than the generality of other ſervants. If any family accuſed a ſervant of pilfering, negligence, drunkenneſs

or wantonneſs among the maids, theſe were all human infirmities, no way atrocious in their nature. They were alſo hard to be aſcertained; ſo that it was almoſt impoſſible to bring a proof of the facts to the ſatisfaction of the court. But, if one happened to be accuſed of doing any uncommon ſervice at their deſire, or working when others were allowed to play, this was high treaſon againſt the conſtitution: and he was condemned without mercy, and ſometimes without hearing.

But of all the crimes of this ſort, the moſt unpardonable was whatever tended to impeach the wiſdom, or weaken the authority of the annual meetings of the corporation. When an inferior court was ordered to introduce a ſervant into a family who had refuſed to receive him, ſometimes a member or two would humbly repreſent, that the terms of the oath appeared to them abſurd and profane in that inſtance, and begged to be excuſed.—Whenever this happened, they were dragged as delinquents to the bar, rated and abuſed, ſtripped, and branded, declared infamous, and incapable even of repentance. It was many times affirmed in the general meeting, that no man could be guilty of a crime which ſo much as approached in guilt to that of diſparaging the authority of the corporation of ſervants.

I muſt take this opportunity of acquainting the reader with a ſtory that happened a few years before my informer left the country. One of the ſervants, who was a great oppoſer of the prevailing meaſures, finding his brethren to be deaf to ſerious reaſoning, fell upon a ſingular device. Being poſſeſſed of a vein of humour, and knowing a little of the art of paint-

ing, he drew a picture of the droll or ludicrous kind, in which, by ænigmatical characters, he repreſented the various impoſitions of the ſervants in general. He alſo took off the likeneſſes of the principal and moſt active leaders of the corporation, and put them in the moſt comical poſtures imaginable. Here was to be ſeen a fellow capering and dancing in a garden all full of weeds, and his inſtruments lying beſide him, quite grown over with ruſt.—Another carrying a baſket over his arm, with a ſign of a pine apple in his hand, and a paſſenger, on examining the contents, finds nothing but ſtinking fiſh, and ſtops his noſe.—A great bloated fellow, ſwelled like a tun, challenging the whole country to run a race with him.—Another hurrying away a girl into a corner, and covering her with his frock.—Theſe and many others, he drew in ſuch a manner, as clearly to expoſe their knavery and oſtentation.

This picture was ſtuck up, in the night-time, near a public road leading to a great town. As the perſons were all very well known, it is not to be imagined what entertainment it afforded to the people. No body could look upon it without laughing; and whenever any of the ſervants, honoured with a place in it, were ſeen upon the ſtreets, the boys gathered about them in crowds, and, to their unſpeakable mortification, mimicked the poſtures in which they had been repreſented. Copies in miniature were taken of this performance, and kept in many families; ſo that, whenever the ſervants were in an ill humour, they would pull out the draught and hold it in their eye.

The fury and reſentment of the ſervants, on the

publication of this piece, is not to be conceived. The author had done it with much caution and ſecrecy, that they could not get him legally convicted. However, they either diſcovered, or at leaſt thought they had diſcovered who he was, and employed themſelves night and day, in deviſing methods of revenge. Above all, that unlucky fellow, who had been repreſented following the girl, was ſo tranſported with rage, that he ſcarce ever returned to his right ſenſes. He had been ſomething of a draughtſman himſelf, ſo he ſet about making a picture in ridicule of the induſtrious ſervants; but, either the thing itſelf was ſo difficult, or he proceeded with ſo much rage and trepidation, that it was a perfect caricature, and his friends prevailed with him to ſuppreſs it.

The poor author, in the mean time, was obliged to be conſtantly upon his guard, as there was always a ſet of deſperadoes lying in wait for him, armed with clubs, and fully determined to beat his brains out, if they could catch him in a proper place. In the mean time, they all agreed in telling lies upon him without ceaſing. They affirmed, that no body but a complete raſcal could be capable of ſuch a performance; that to betray ſervants to their maſters, was at any rate a malicious trick: but, that for a ſervant to laugh at his fellow ſervants, and ſet other people a laughing at them too, was the cleareſt demonſtration of a depraved heart. It was ten years after the fact was committed, that my informer left the country; and he declared that their reſentment had not abated in the leaſt degree: a circumſtance which, I obſerved, had made a deep impreſſion upon his

mind; ſo that he would often ſay, From the fury of an enraged ſervant, good Lord deliver me. He alſo told me, that he was convinced by this example, that wit and humour was a talent unſpeakably prejudicial to the poſſeſſor: and therefore, if ever he had a child, and obſerved in him the leaſt turn that way, he would apply himſelf with the utmoſt aſſiduity to eradicate it as a vice.

## CHAP. IX.

*The carelessness of Servants in their work. A curious debate in a certain family, which issued in nothing.*

IT will eaſily be perceived, from what has been ſaid above, that the greateſt part of the ſervants were exceſſively negligent. They ſeemed to have two great objects conſtantly in view, and to carry them on hand in hand; the increaſe of their wages, and the diminution of their labour. The truth is, however ſtrange it may ſeem, theſe always bore an exact proportion to one another. Whenever a ſervant got more wages ſettled upon him, he looked upon it as a conſequence, that he ſhould be more ſlothful than before. In the mean time, it was remarkable what ingenious and plauſible reaſonings they always fell upon to juſtify their conduct. On this ſubject particularly they would ſay, What is well done is ſoon done. A ſmall piece of work, executed as it ought to be, is better than marring a great deal, which is worſe than idleneſs.

Inſtead of any other general remarks, I ſhall entertain the reader with a curious example of their ingenuity, in deviſing excuſes for their own neglect. This happened in the family of a great man, about three years after the publication of the ænigmatical picture, and plainly ſhewed that, though the reproof had enraged them, it had contributed nothing to reform them. One morning, almoſt the whole ſervants of this family were gathered together in a large hall, to conſider what work it would be proper for them to fall about that day. A ſervant who, indeed, was not very well looked upon, as inclining a little to the ſober induſtrious kind, complained, that there had been for a long time an intolerable negligence in keeping the fences, and excluding ſtraying or ſtrange cattle from their maſters grounds. He therefore propoſed, that they ſhould immediately go in a body, drive out all the ſtrange cattle, without exception, that were in the incloſures, and mend up the fences, which were now in ſo ſorry a condition. He told them that there were many ſtrange cattle paſturing where they ought not to be; particularly, that he himſelf, not an hour before, had ſeen a large bull, with a thick neck, and dull heavy eyes, but *broad ſhoulders, firm joints, and a lank belly*, which made him fit for jumping. On this a diſpute aroſe, of which the reader may take the following juſt and faithful account.

One obſerved, that he could not agree to the motion, which proceeded from a perſon no way remarkable for a good temper. "If our brother would look a little more at home, ſays he, perhaps he would find leſs reaſon for theſe ſnarling complain-

of the negligence of others. The propoſal is unkind and unbenevolent. There ſhould be great forbearance uſed in every family toward their neighbours. No doubt there have been, and there will be treſpaſſes upon both ſides; and therefore, I am humbly of opinion, that no notice ſhould be taken of it at all."

A ſecond then riſes up, and ſpeaks to the following effect. "If I thought that any good would follow upon what is now propoſed, I ſhould readily agree to it. I am perhaps as much attached to my maſter's intereſt, as the perſon who made this motion, notwithſtanding all his fine profeſſions; but I am perſuaded it would be altogether in vain. There is a ſtrange diſpoſition in beaſts of all kinds to break into thoſe places from which there is any attempt to keep them out; it would therefore only increaſe the evil it pretends to remedy. All perſecution, we know, helps the cauſe of the perſecuted: ſo that ſuppoſing one has made an encroachment at this time, if he were driven out, we may depend upon it, he would immediately return with twenty more at his heels."

A third made a very ſage and learned obſervation. "Take notice, ſays he, what you are about to do. There is more difficulty in it than you apprehend. Is there not a very great ſimilarity in colour, ſhape and ſize, between our maſter's cattle and his neighbour's? It would oblige us to a very ſtrict and particular examination, before we could determine the point. This would create ſuch difference of opinion, ſuch zeal and keenneſs in every one to ſupport his own ſentiments, that we might ſpend the whole time of our ſervice before we could come to

any concluſion. I acknowledge it is a fixed principle, that every beaſt ſhould be kept only on his own maſter's grounds; but, I hope you will be ſenſible, it is only a ſpeculative point which beaſt belongs to one maſter, and which to another. On this ſubject wiſe and good ſervants have differed in all ages, and will differ to the end of the world."

A fourth delivered the following opinion. "I cannot help being againſt the motion, for a reaſon that nobody has yet taken notice of. I can aſſure you from my certain knowledge, it would give great pleaſure to the ſtrange cattle themſelves, and, in particular to the bull, who ſeems to have given occaſion to the preſent debate. He has a vaſt ſatisfaction in being gazed upon and wondered at, which would be the certain conſequence of this attempt. Beſides, he is infected with an inveterate itch, which gives him an infinite pleaſure in being ſcrubbed and clawed by the thorns in the paſſage."

A fifth ſaid, "I am ſurpriſed to ſee ſo much time ſpent upon this ridiculous propoſal. The author of it ſeems to have forgot a fundamental law of the corporation, that no ſervant ſhould meddle with the affairs of another family, or pretend to take the inſpection or government of any beaſts, but ſuch as belong to his own maſter. Now, ſays he, this is manifeſtly the caſe in the preſent inſtance; nay, it is even implied in the propoſal itſelf, which is, therefore, quite irregular and incompetent. If that bull does not belong to us, let his own maſter ſend for him when he pleaſes: we have nothing to do with him. Let us mind our own affairs."

Then roſe a ſervant of ancient ſtanding, ſeveral

of his teeth having been loſt by old age, who bore a particular mark of his maſter's favour. He was remarkable for making long ſpeeches, of which it was difficult to comprehend the meaning. After ſpeaking about half an hour, quite unintelligibly, he concluded thus. "Brethren, I do not deny that ſuch a propoſal as this might have done very well in former times, when the fences were almoſt entire, and the offending ſtrangers very few; but, at preſent, it is quite romantic and impoſſible. Will any man ſeriouſly pretend, at this time of day, when the hedges are almoſt wholly broke down, and ſo many encroachments on every hand, to affirm, that none ought to continue in the incloſures but ſuch as truly belong to our maſter? I am afraid his fields would make a very deſolate appearance, for there would be few left behind."

Laſt of all, one tells them in a few words, that the debate was altogether idle; that there was a miſtake at the very bottom of the affair: for, by the beſt information he could procure, the beaſt in queſtion was not a bull but an ox.

To ſum up the matter, one or other of theſe various and contradictory reaſons prevailed upon a great majority to come to this reſolution, That it was not prudent or expedient, at this time, to agree to the propoſal; and, therefore, the intruders in general ſhould be winked at, and that beaſt in particular, whether he were bull or ox, ſhould continue where he was.

## CHAP. X.

*Of the ambition and covetousness of the Servants, and the various methods they fell upon to gratify their desires.*

I HAVE obſerved before, that the conſtitution in this province was framed with great care, and ſeemed particularly calculated to prevent ambition and love of pre-eminence. For this reaſon they eſtabliſhed a parity among the ſervants, and took every meaſure they could think of, to prevent the introduction of overſeers and arch-overſeers. By this time, however, the ſervants had not only degenerated in point of fidelity and diligence, but had made great encroachments upon the conſtitution itſelf. They had a prodigious hankering after the high-ſounding titles, and immenſe revenues, which were given to ſervants in the neighbouring province. It grieved them to hear, and ſometimes, when ſent upon buſineſs to that country, to ſee, that ſome of the overſeers, lived in ſplendid palaces, and were carried about in chariots, while they themſelves were ſtill obliged to wear the dreſs of ſervants, and generally to walk a-foot.

Gladly would they have introduced theſe offices in their own province; but the great men who had hitherto aſſiſted them, dreaded the expence, and would not agree to it. They were, therefore, obliged to proceed cautiouſly and gradually. In ſome

few inſtances, they made it appear, that one ſervant might be introduced to two different families, and enjoy both the ſalaries. As to the work, they might be ſometimes in the one and ſometimes in the other; or, if one of them was a family of ſmall conſequence, they might do well enough without any ſervant at all. They begged, in the moſt abject manner, of the governor of the province, that a ſmall number of ſalaries might be appointed without any office annexed to them, by way of gratuities, for the encouragement of good ſervants. This was done; and there followed a terrible competition for obtaining them, which produced a moſt malignant hatred between thoſe who were ſucceſsful and thoſe who were not.

The reader may perhaps imagine, that the hope of meriting thoſe ſalaries would excite them to vie with one another, in doing the buſineſs of the families where they ſerved. It was quite the contrary. They tried every method of advancement but that only; or, if any did try it in that way they were ſure to be diſappointed. Some of them uſed the old way of flattery, which had always a very great effect. Some became political tools, ſpies, and informers to the prevailing party at court. Some were not aſhamed to become pimps and panders to great men, and even ſometimes to attend them in their nocturnal expeditions. Some endeavoured to make themſelves remarkable for feats and achievements quite out of the way of their own buſineſs. One of them, for example, would make a wind-mill, of curious ſtructure, and put it upon the top of the houſe where he lived. The conſequence of this was, that paſſengers going that way, after ſtanding ſtill and admiring it a little, would aſk any perſon

they saw near, who had done it. The answer immediately followed, *The servant who lives here, he is a most ingenious fellow as ever was seen.* Thus was his fame spread abroad, and sometimes came to the ears of the people above.

I cannot help particularly mentioning one, who was the most successful of all that had gone before him, who was alive when my informer left the country, and probably may be alive at this very time. The method he fell upon, was telling wonderful stories of the heroic actions of that people's predecessors, a subject of which they were enthusiastically fond. He had acquired a very great knack of story telling, and could describe things so to the life both by word and gesture, that every body was delighted to hear him. He immediately gave over all work in the family to which he belonged; and when they civilly put him in mind of his neglect, he told them they might go about their business, for they were a pack of seditious scoundrels altogether below his notice. He was a fellow of uncommon ability; and no less remarkable for enterprise and resolution. He carried on his schemes; procured for himself one salary after another; and did not fail to laugh at the simplicity of those who bestowed them, saying among his intimate companions, *He blessed God that mankind were so easily deceived, by the formal countenance of a servant.*

The supernumerary salaries, however, were so few, that they were soon exhausted, and did little else, indeed, than excite a hungering and thirsting after more. To remedy this, they fell upon a method of gratifying the vanity of those whose pockets

they could not fill. A title was invented, which, (like the honorary rewards of the ancients in this part of the world) they ſaid, would ſerve to diſtinguiſh illuſtrious merit, and raiſe a happy emulation. The title was, Maſter of Service; and the directors of the ſchools or places of exerciſe were appointed to beſtow it, according to the ſkill and proficiency of the candidates. Immediately applications came in from all quarters, and it was dealt about very liberally, and, if poſſible, even more abſurdly than the ſalaries had been before. There was hardly an inſtance of its being beſtowed for real knowledge or uſeful induſtry; but for ſome whimſical qualification of a different kind. If a man had invented a new dance or ſong, or collected a whole barrel of ſalted butter-flies in one ſummer, or made a gold chain for binding a flea to a poſt, he was inſtantly created a Maſter of Service.

## CHAP. XI.

### *Of the ſentiments of the People concerning the Servants, and their manner of treating them.*

THE reader may probably be wondering in himſelf, how the people behaved in theſe circumſtances, and what became of their affairs. He may be ready to think that their patience muſt be by this time nearly exhauſted, and ſome terrible revolution at hand. The truth is, the patience of many of them had been at an end for many years;

but, being divided among themſelves, their influence was not ſufficient to produce a general change. It is impoſſible to mention all the effects which the conduct of the ſervants had upon the people; but it will be worth while to take particular notice of two claſſes of men, and their behaviour upon the ſubject.

One ſet of people roſe among them, whoſe ſentiments and conduct were as ſingular and extraordinary, as any thing recorded in this book. They were men who made high pretenſions to reaſon and penetration, and gave themſelves much to abſtract reflections upon the nature of things. They were of opinion, that all the wiſdom of the nation centered in themſelves; and that all the reſt were downright fools or madmen. However, entering upon their ſpeculations with ſuch an overweening conceit of themſelves, their boaſted reaſons firſt led them into many miſtakes, and at laſt fairly turned their heads.

It was their cuſtom to ſearch into hiſtory, and particularly into the hiſtory of the ſervants. There they found, that in every age, there had been a great deal of knavery among the ſervants. All the inſtances of this ſort they uſed to collect, publiſh, and compare with the conduct of the ſervants in their own times; which they expoſed with the greateſt ſeverity. At laſt, by long dwelling upon this ſubject, they came to be of opinion, that there ought to be no ſuch thing in nature as a ſervant; that they never had done any thing but harm; and that the world would be much better without them. Sometimes ſober-minded people attempted to ſet them to rights, and alledged, that though the dif-

honeſt had always been too numerous as well as noiſy, yet ſtill there were ſome of great worth and uſefulneſs: nay, that ſociety, in the nature of things could not ſubſiſt without perſons in lower ſtations, to ſerve and accommodate thoſe in higher. This was ſo far from having an effect upon them, that they became always more poſitive upon contradiction, and ſcarce ever failed to advance opinions ſtill more wild and romantic than before. Inſtead of yielding that ſervants were neceſſary in ſociety, they affirmed, that it was not only deſirable, but extremely poſſible, to have a whole nation of lords, without one perſon among them of inferior degree.

They affirmed, that excepting ſervants, all other men were by nature wiſe, honeſt, and active; fully ſufficient for their own happineſs; and that they would have been quite virtuous and happy, without any exception, if they had not been blind-folded and deceived by the ſervants. To this race, whom they uſed often, in a fit of raving, to curſe in a moſt dreadful manner, they imputed all the envy, malice, oppreſſion, covetouſneſs, fraud, rapine, and bloodſhed that ever had happened ſince the beginning of the world. In ſupport of their ſcheme, they made learned diſquiſitions on nature, and the firſt cauſe of all things. They ſhewed that nature was, and muſt be wiſe and good in all her productions; and, therefore, that man muſt needs be free from every thing that is evil, and his original conſtitution perfectly juſt and ſound. All the diſorders that were to be ſeen in ſociety were eaſily accounted for, from the helliſh machinations of the ſervants.—In the mean time, it was obvious, that the ſervants were

the product of nature too; and according to the ſame reaſoning, muſt have been of as gentle and tractable diſpoſitions, and in all reſpects as faultleſs as their maſters. This manifeſt difficulty in their own ſcheme, however unaccountable it may appear, they never once reflected upon, nor by conſequence attempted to reſolve.

Sometimes they were preſſed with the neceſſity of ſervants to cultivate the ground, which, if neglected, it was plain, would grow over with briers and thorns, and every noxious weed. Here they immediately recurred to their old argument, the excellency of nature's productions; and upon the ſtrength of it, preſumed abſolutely to deny the fact. They ſaid, were the earth only left to itſelf, it would produce nothing but what was uſeful and ſalutary, and that in great abundance, for the ſupport of its inhabitants; that all the pretended cultivation of it by the ſervants was but ſpoiling it; and that they themſelves had ſowed the ſeeds of every hurtful or unneceſſary plant. It was to no purpoſe to mention to them, either the vaſt tracts of uncultivated ground, or the deſolate condition of a neglected field; all this, they pretended, aroſe from a certain ſympathy in the ſeveral parts of the earth one with another, and from poiſonous vapours eaſily carried by the wind, from the places where ſervants had been at work. In ſhort, they ſometimes projected a ſcheme for a new ſettlement where no ſervants ſhould be admitted; and where they hoped, in a little time, every man would be as wiſe as a philoſopher, as rich as a merchant, and as magnificent as a king.

After all, the perfection of their abſurdity ap-

peared in the following circumſtance. Though it was plain, to any perſon of reflection, that their delirium took its riſe from the tricks and miſbehaviour of bad ſervants, yet they had the moſt rooted and inveterate antipathy at thoſe that were good. The reaſon, probably was, that the diligence and uſefulneſs of this laſt ſort ſtood directly in the way of their ſcheme, and prevented the reſt of the nation from being of their opinion. All ſeemingly good ſervants they affirmed to be at bottom arrant knaves; and in one reſpect, unſpeakably worſe than any of the reſt, becauſe they appeared to be better. The idle, ſlothful, worthleſs ſervants, were frequently their companions; and it was one of their higheſt entertainments to lead ſuch fellows into frolicks, miſchief, or debauchery, and then point them out to their fellow citizens, and uſe words to this purpoſe, "You poor hood-winked fools, do you ſee theſe raſcals? why will you any longer harbour them in your houſes? they are all of one complexion, and will infallibly bring you to miſery and ſpeedy deſtruction."

## CHAP. XII.

*Continuation of the same subject. The sentiments and conduct of others, in consequence of the behaviour of the Servants.*

WE are not to ſuppoſe that the whole nation loſt their ſenſes. No: by far the greater

number acted as prudently and rationally as men could do in their circumstances. According to plain common sense, in proportion as corruption and degeneracy increased among the servants, they set the higher value on such as were honest and faithful. They used every mean in their power to procure such for their own families, agreeably to the laws of the corporation. When this could not be brought about, or when a good-for-nothing-fellow was buckled to the salary, they put themselves to the additional expence of hiring one according to their own mind; paid the former his wages duly, and only desired the favour of him to give them no trouble, but spend his time according to his own fancy.

It was pleasant enough to observe the different conduct of the established servants, according to their different tempers, when they fell under this predicament. Some of them were greatly enraged to see the service of another preferred to theirs, used many artful methods to prevent it where they could, and took every opportunity of venting their malice, or glutting their revenge when they could not. Where they could get any body to believe them, they asserted that all skill and power of doing good was confined to the corporation; that it was inherent in them, and descended in their blood from one generation to another, like courage in the race of game cocks. The others, they pretended, were a spurious brood, and that it was impossible to train them so as to make them fit for service.

If this did not gain credit, all possible pains

were taken to diſparage the conduct of the additional ſervants. Their work was examined with the greateſt ſtrictneſs, every flaw in it pointed out, and many faults imputed to it merely through envy. If any piece of work appeared to be ſubſtantial, they pretended it wanted neatneſs, and was altogether inelegant. This charge, however, made little impreſſion upon the people. They had been ſo long plagued with ſervants who minded nothing but ornament, both in their perſons and their work, that they were rather pleaſed than diſguſted with one of a more homely carriage.

When nothing elſe would do, the groſſeſt lies and calumnies were ſpread, both of the new ſervants and thoſe who employed them. It was pretended, that they ſowed the ſeeds of ſedition and diſaffection, in the families where they got admittance. Sometimes this accuſation, though utterly groundleſs, obtained ſuch credit with the governors, that, if they had a complaint to make, or a cauſe to try, they could ſcarcely expect juſtice. It was alſo alledged, that they terrified the children out of their wits, by telling frightful ſtories in the winter evenings. You might meet with many of the eſtabliſhed ſervants who aſſerted, and even ſeemed to believe, that all who employed any other than themſelves, were idiots or crack-brained, and deſtitute of common ſenſe.

On the other hand, not a few of the eſtabliſhed ſervants were altogether indifferent how many others were hired, and how little work was left to themſelves. They knew that their wages were well ſecured to them, which was the main chance; and they found rather more time and liberty to follow

the bent of their inclinations. Perhaps they would have been better ſatisfied if the people had been content with what kind and quality of work they thought proper to do. But as this was not to be expected, the hiring of others rendered all matters perfectly eaſy, and their lives were one continued ſcene of indolence or pleaſure.

In the mean time, it was highly diverting to hear how they expreſſed themſelves upon this ſubject, and with how much art and cunning they made a virtue of neceſſity. They uſed to extol their own candour and benevolence. "Gentlemen," one of them would ſay, "you ſee with what diſcretion I uſe you. I am always glad to ſee liberty prevail, and every man ſuffered to do what ſeems proper to himſelf. I am well pleaſed, that you ſhould hire as many ſervants as you incline. I aſk no more, than that I may have a clean neat bed-chamber, in a convenient part of the houſe, my wages well and regularly paid, and a ſmall bit of ground in the garden, to bring up a few delicious herbs and fruits for my own uſe. If theſe things are properly attended to, you ſhall find me a good man to live with; I ſhall never interfere with your work in the leaſt, or give you any manner of trouble, even by making remarks upon it." In ſuch a caſe, it would happen now and then, that one of the family, touched a little with the abſurdity of this phlegmatic ſpeech, would anſwer, "That, very well, he might make himſelf eaſy, ſince all the while, he was well fed and clothed at their expence." This he would receive with ſilent contempt, and diſplay the greateſt ſatisfaction in his own compoſure of ſpirit, and meekneſs of temper.

As for the remaining part of the nation, they reflected very little upon their condition, but took such servants as were sent to them, and rubbed on as well as they could. Such quiet and passive people were highly extolled by the servants, who took all opportunities of declaring, that they were the only solid and rational persons in the whole kingdom. These praises delighted them greatly; so that they lived as poor and as merry as beggars, who have nothing to hope, and nothing to fear.

# CONCLUSION.

THUS I have given the reader an account of this extraordinary clafs of men; and, I am certain, he muft confefs, there is fomething in their characters and conduct, proper to excite a mixture of laughter and indignation. It is alfo probable, that he feels a confiderable degree of fympathy with the deluded and oppreffed people, and is anxious to know whether there appeared any profpect of deliverance. This was a queftion I often afked at my informer, who affured me that, from what he had heard and feen, there was not the moft diftant profpect of reformation by the fervants themfelves. The honeftcr fort were always borne down, traduced and flandered; and thofe of an oppofite character, had fo long kept the management of the corporation in their hands, that they reckoned themfelves fecure in their authority, and openly fet at defiance both the people in general, and their fellow-fervants.

There remained juft a glimpfe of hope from one quarter, *viz.* the gentlemen who had been chofen to the office of helpers. They had at firft contributed as much as any to the introduction of wrong meafures; but, not being under the temptation o

intereſt, they began to open their eyes at laſt. For ſome years they had been a conſiderable reſtraint upon the violence of the ſervants, and had prevented them in ſeveral inſtances from degrading, ſtripping, and branding thoſe who had incurred their diſpleaſure, by doing buſineſs at unſeaſonable hours. They had alſo contributed to the diſgrace and diſmiſſion of ſome drunken ſots, and laſcivious wretches, whom ſeveral of the leading ſervants had a ſtrong inclination to ſpare. From theſe circumſtances, ſome flattered themſelves that a change might be brought about; and that, though the ſervants would never think of any reformation themſelves, it would ſoon be *forced upon them by a foreign hand.*

After all, it was but very uncertain whether any material change would ſoon take place; and therefore, while we can only ſend that unhappy people our good wiſhes, we have reaſon to rejoice in our own good fortune, that we are perfectly free from impoſitions of the ſame or any ſimilar kind.

END OF VOLUME SIXTH.

JOHN TURNBULL, *Printer.*